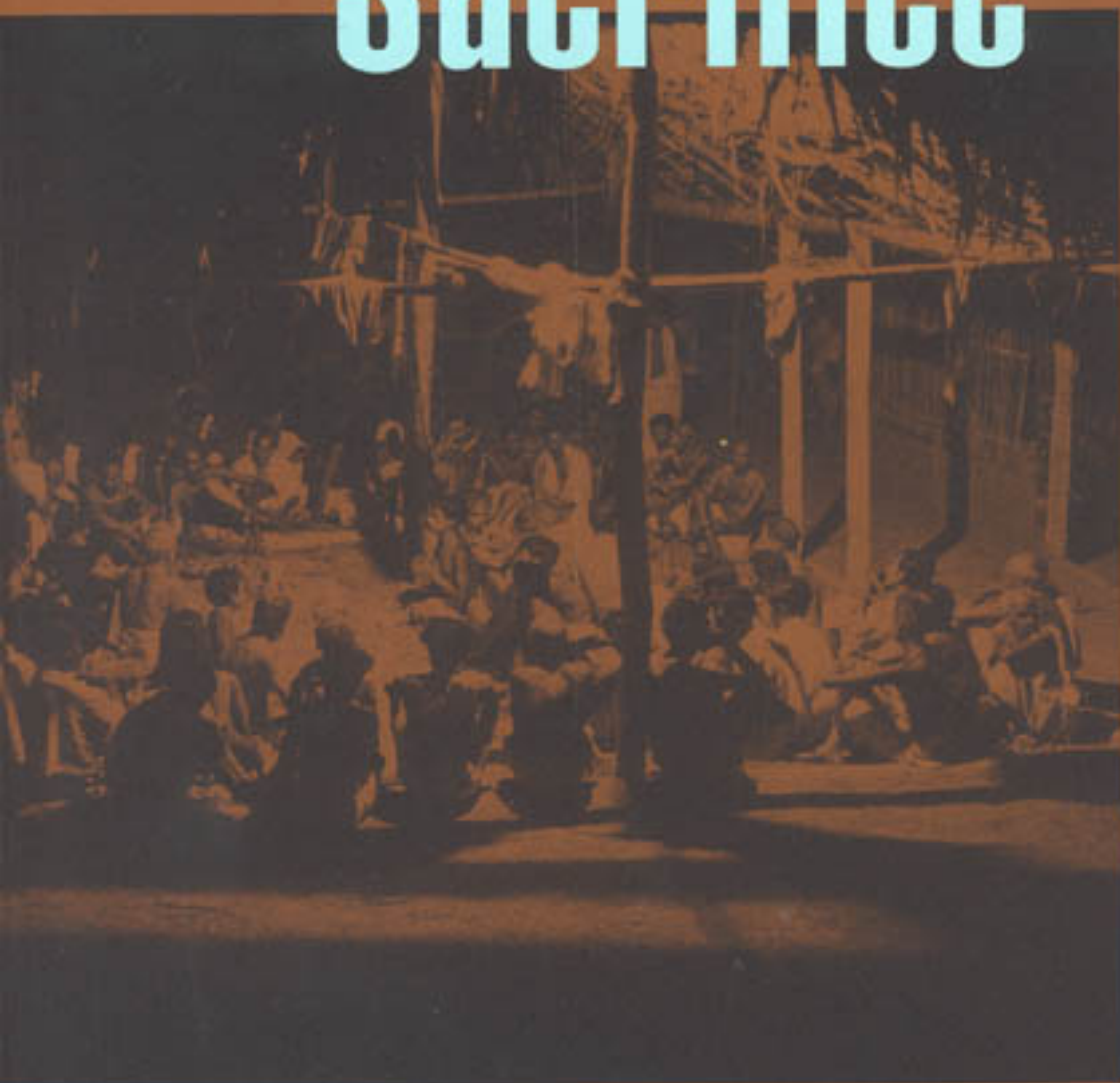


J. C. HEESTERMAN

*The Broken World of*

# Sacrifice



*An Essay in Ancient Indian Ritual*

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# THE BROKEN WORLD OF SACRIFICE

*An Essay in Ancient  
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J. C. HEESTERMAN

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*FOR THERESE*



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## *P r e f a c e*

THE RECORD THE ANCIENT INDIAN RITUALISTS left us of their struggle with sacrifice and its outcome, the Vedic corpus of ritual, is as fascinating as it is momentous. But it is not an easy companion to live with, nor was it at any time in its homeland. It was at all times a stone of offense. The Vedic corpus poses questions on sacrifice, on ritual, and, ultimately, on man and his fate. Putting one's experience with it on paper cannot be easy either, and it will show. The result can only be, in the literal sense, an "essay" that must attempt to do justice to the intricate detail of the ritual system and to respond to the speculative thought that underlies it. In other words, such an "essay" can hardly avoid being speculative itself, as well as encumbered with tiresome minutiae.

The reader may well feel caught between detail and speculation. I have, therefore, followed the suggestion of setting out the main line of the reasoning used in the essay in a brief introduction. The degree to which this may provide something like Ariadne's thread into and out of the maze I must leave to the reader willing to go through with it.

The attempt to put together thoughts gathered over the years is necessarily a lonely affair. Still the help and support, often unwittingly given, by loyal friends, sympathetic colleagues, and—invaluable privilege of academia—receptive students are essential to the effort. I would like them to know of my gratitude. I desist from the pleasure of recording their names. It would look too much like a curiously assorted as well as an unavoidably lacunar rollcall. I may be allowed, though, to mention the institutions that put me in their debt by their liberality.

In the best academic tradition Leiden University offered me the freedom I needed. I hope it will continue to cherish the "socially irrelevant" fields.

A special debt of gratitude I owe to the Master and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford, who generously gave me the accolade of hospitality in their unparalleled haven. It was there, as Radhakrishnan Lecturer, that I started on the present work.

The Netherlands Institute of Advanced Studies at Wassenaar offered me a fruitful year of unencumbered reflection and writing.

Finally I want to mention the institutes of Indian and of Buddhist Studies of Vienna University and the Asian research institute of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. It is a privilege to witness the growth, against the tide, of the Viennese center of excellence in Asian Studies and to be

associated with it. Here I should also record my gratitude to the Abbot and his confratres of the renowned Schotten-Abtei at Vienna whose seigneurial hospitality adds a special quality to my Viennese sojourns.

I dedicate this essay to Therese Visser, my wife. For all the reasons she knows the book is hers by right, and by more than right alone.

## Introduction

### I

"SACRIFICE" APPEARS TO BE OUT OF FASHION. In anthropology, where once it was an important theme, it seems to have fallen in disuse if not disrepute.<sup>1</sup> One cannot help being reminded of Manu, India's mythic lawgiver, stating that sacrifice is no longer appropriate for our age; not, to be sure, because of our progressive enlightenment, but rather on account of the moral decrepitude of our age, the fourth and worst of mankind.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, sacrifice is a starkly dramatic and transgressive event that requires extraordinary moral fiber to sustain it. The ancient Indian texts not seldom tell us so. For our part, the threat of violence and destruction is too disturbing, not to say barbaric, to glorify it with the high-sounding word "sacrifice." When we furthermore notice that it is used to cover an array of notions and practices too diverse to be brought with ease under a single caption, it is tempting to view the concept as a scholarly construct. And as a scholarly construct it can in equally scholarly fashion be deconstructed, leaving behind an inchoate welter of unpleasant or cruel customs. Incidentally, the ancient Indian Vedic thinkers were past masters at such deconstruction. Why and how they deconstructed sacrifice will be the theme of the following pages. By contrast, however, they had no doubt about the reality of sacrifice as a unitary institution, even though they fundamentally changed it.

If "sacrifice" is at a low ebb, "ritual" is now very much in the ascent. To all appearances "ritual" has replaced "sacrifice" in the attention of scholars. "Ritual" has the great advantage of being concrete, and directly observable. It is concerned with rules and prescripts that may or may not be followed to the letter but are anyway clear in themselves and open to description and formal analysis. The scholar who has gone furthest along this line is Frits Staal, who proposes to study ritual exclusively as "syntax" without reference to its possible semantics. In the place of intrinsic meaning ritual offers the internal order of its structure, which turns out to be capable of accommodating a variety of meanings the participants wish to assign to it.<sup>3</sup> But what about sacrifice? Staal retains the word, albeit confined to animal sacrifice, but the latter is still no more than ritual, pure and simple. Here *yajña*, sacrifice, becomes practically synonymous with ritual. No doubt this line of inquiry is valid and rewarding, even more so for being not far removed from the interests and intentions of the Vedic ritualists. They can be shown to have been deeply concerned with turning sacrifice into a closed and unalterable system of rules governing acts (*karma*) and utterances (*mantra*).



Their probing reflections, known as *mīmāṃsā*,<sup>4</sup> led them to the basic syntactic structures of ritual.<sup>5</sup> Those they exploited to the fullest in the construction of their system, as the discussions in the *brāhmaṇa* texts go to show. It is this that makes Vedic ritual a privileged field for the purely syntactic analysis proposed by Staal. Naturally such an analysis will not tell us much if anything about the institution of sacrifice. Yet it was sacrifice that was the overriding concern of the ancient ritualists.

## 2

So what is the relationship between sacrifice and ritual?<sup>6</sup> The two are not the same, and not for the trivial reason that not all ritual is sacrifice. Neither is all sacrifice ritual. We will come back to the question at length. Here let me only state as briefly as possible my understanding of sacrifice and its relationship to ritual. In the simplest terms, sacrifice deals with the riddle of life and death, which are intimately linked and at the same time each other's absolute denial. The riddle cannot be resolved, it can only be reenacted by the participants in the "play" of sacrifice,<sup>7</sup> whose stakes are the "goods of life" as against death. It would be a mistake to take this in a symbolic or metaphorical sense. The "goods of life" are, in real terms, food and cattle, the substance of life and survival. Despite being "play," sacrifice is no less consequential. At issue is the repartition of life and death among its participants. In other words, as I will argue, it is a life-and-death contest.

That, it would seem, is why the *brāhmaṇa* texts constantly associate sacrifice with the ever-renewed fight of *devas* and *asuras*, of the gods and their adversaries; why the rival is continuously being evoked; why the texts insist on telling us how the priestly officiant can harm his sacrificial patron. The Upaniṣads still preserve the grim memory of sacrifice when they say that the loser in the great Upaniṣadic debates—the verbal contests that, like other contests, were an essential part of the sacrificial scenario—will literally have to pay with his head unless he acknowledges defeat in time and commends himself to his victor.

Rather than the priest, sacrifice calls forth the warrior who finds his privileged arena on the place of sacrifice. Originally the two figures, priest and warrior, were not mutually exclusive. They seem, on the contrary, to be intimately related. Thus, the Celtic druid "is not only priest but also a warrior." Conversely, the *fianna*, the warrior bands, did not admit an aspirant "unless he was a poet and had studied the twelve books of poetry."<sup>8</sup> As often is the case, there is a strikingly suggestive resemblance with the archaic conditions that have left copious traces in the Vedic texts.

Sacrifice, then, is not just an edifying religious ceremony separate from man's worldly affairs. It is the arena of conflict and alliance, the field in which honor and position are to be won, the market for the distribution of

wealth. It is the renewal of the past and the gamble for the future. Combining in itself all functions—social, economic, political, religious—sacrifice is the catastrophic center, the turning point of life and death, deciding each time anew, through endless rounds of winning, losing, and *revanche*, the state of human affairs here and in the hereafter. The world of sacrifice is a broken world. Broken at its very center, it is forever hovering on the brink of collapse. The aversion toward sacrifice on the part of both the ancient ritualist and the modern scholar is all too understandable.

If sacrifice is catastrophic, ritual is the opposite. It is called upon to control the passion and fury of the sacrificial contest and to keep such forces within bounds. Sacrificial ritual represents “the rules of the game.” However, there is no guarantee that the rules will hold. The stakes are high—in fact the highest imaginable; tension is near the breaking point, and frenzied passion may take over, wreaking havoc. What happens then the catastrophic story of the *Mahābhārata* tells us. The epic starts with the orderly arrangements of a sacrifice that develops into nightmarish devastation. But even without invoking India’s great epic we know what can happen at an incomparably less consequential football game.

This is the point at which the ancient Indian ritualists intervened. The target of their intervention was precisely the sacrificial contest. They tell us so in a myth they formed out of older materials. It relates how *Prajāpati*, the Lord of Creatures, decisively defeated his rival partner, *Mṛtyu*, Death, in the sacrificial contest.<sup>9</sup> The interesting part of the story lies in the way *Prajāpati* overcomes Death, namely through the revelatory vision of (numerical) equivalence. This immediately enables him to integrate the sacrificial panoply of Death into his own and so put his rival out of commission as an independent sacrificial agent. Incidentally, equivalence is the keystone of the Vedic ritualists’ “science of ritual.” The punch line, however, is the conclusion of the story: “Now there is no sacrificial contest anymore . . . , one is the sacrifice, *Prajāpati* is the sacrifice.” For all the studied flatness of the *brāhmaṇa* prose style one can hardly miss the note of triumph. *Prajāpati*’s breaking the deadlock of the lasting contest with Death is the ritualists’ breakthrough from the vicious circle of contest and threatening ruin. It proclaims the monistic doctrine of sacrifice that invalidates the agonistic dualism of the sacrificial contest.

3

The breakthrough was full of far-reaching consequences. It meant a new, even revolutionary view of mankind and universe. Man, as the sole and undisputed master in his sacrificial enclosure, construes his own universe in exclusive obedience to the rule of ritual. What had been a contest involving rival partners was now a “clapping with one hand.” Or, to use a more

homely metaphor, one might try to imagine how a football game would be played by a single, unopposed team, which would have to act as its own opponent. Such a proposition would require a rigidly inflexible choreography, enabling the single team to supply the moves and countermoves of their absent opponents. There would be no climax, no surprises, no excitement, and, most important, no devastating furor. The outcome would be present at the start. Rather, there would be no outcome at all. Its only point would be the flat rhythm of the perfectly executed movements and gestures of the choreographic construction.

It was just such an operation that the Vedic ritualists undertook. To remove the sting of death and destruction, they broke up the dualistic scenario with its cyclical, yearly or seasonal, recurrence. The broken pieces were remolded according to a standard format and rearranged in lineal sequences. While the moves and countermoves of the contending parties “organically” slotted into each other in accordance with the “rules of the game,” the broken and remolded pieces of the deconstructed scenario had to be artificially joined through concatenation and insertion according to explicit rules. This involved the ritualists in systematic reflection on the basic syntactic structures and brought them to develop their “science of ritual.” The system they devised is a construction of astounding coherence and sophistication, and it may be considered a measure of their achievement that it closely recalls—as Staal emphasizes—patterns of animal ritualization. But this cannot make us overlook the fact that the Vedic system of ritual is not just an unreflected reemergence of patterns that predate *Homo sapiens*.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, it is an intellectual achievement that should be rated a paradigm of what Max Weber called “formal rationality.”<sup>11</sup> Its rational bend becomes apparent when we notice that it is not just to be done but is required to be “known.” What has to be known are the equivalences, the keystone of ritualistic thought, to which the ubiquitous phrase “he who knows thus” refers. We even meet with the statement that knowing the ritual is as good as, if not better than, its actual performance. This thoroughly reflected ritual is clearly of a different, “second order.” It no longer serves the game of sacrifice, it is itself the game.

#### 4

Ritualism meant the total subjection of sacrifice to the rule of ritual. The awesome risk and insecurity of sacrifice had become the technical mistake to be rectified by equally technical means. Thus, the sacrificial contest was now no more than such a mistake, consisting in two single sacrificers’ having their places of sacrifice perchance too near to each other (one wonders though why they should have taken the chance).

One may wonder whether ritualism in its takeover did not put sacrifice

out of commission, as Prajāpati did his rival partner, Death. However, ritualism did retain the paradoxical—albeit minimal—feature of destruction that characterizes sacrifice. It even stressed this feature as the single ultimately effective ritual act. Obviously ritualism could not do away with the pivotal issue of sacrifice, the conundrum of life and death. That the ancient Indian ritualists still called their revolutionary system of ritual *yajña* is not just “conservatism”—a stopgap notion—but fully justified. Here also lies the essential difference with that other “paradigm of formal rationality,” the ancient Indian science of grammar.<sup>12</sup> Put negatively, practitioners of the science of ritual did not and could not emancipate it from its religious moorings—that is, from the enigmatic nexus of life and death—as the grammarians could and did. Nor did the ritualists aim for such emancipation. Their concern was with man’s fate here and in the hereafter. Prefiguring both Upaniṣadic thought and the Mīmāṃsā theory, which called the main act of sacrifice *puruṣārtha*, “having man as its purpose,” the ritual manual of Baudhāyana asks: “Where then is sacrifice?” The answer is, “In man.”<sup>13</sup>

The significance of ritualism, then, reached far beyond the institution of sacrifice. The exclusive emphasis on the individual sacrificer not only desocialized sacrifice but, more importantly, placed it in a transcendent realm of its own. While the sacrificial contest reenacted the enigmatic relationship of life and death, ritualism—stripping away the contest—posited the absolute rule of ritual beyond life and death. It thereby opened up a definitive split between the dynamic sacrality of the life-and-death nexus and the static transcendence of the Vedic injunction—between the awesome uncertainty of the sacred and the dead certainty of the transcendent. As the absolute rule of ritual rose above the lived-in order, it demoted sacrality, deprived of its ultimate value, to the level of the mundane, where it developed new foci such as court and temple but mostly splintered and became diffused.<sup>14</sup>

We may recognize this in the separation of temporal power and spiritual authority, which is also well known elsewhere. But in its Indian version it has its own, particularly sharp profile. The temporal power has not been “secularized.” It bears the imprint of the sacred but lacks the transcendence of spiritual authority. This is particularly noticeable in the contradictory relationship of king and brahmin. The two must work together, but at the same time the brahmin is warned in no uncertain terms against involvement with the king and his sacrality, which would jeopardize the brahmin’s Vedic claim to transcendence. For the same reason the brahmin cannot be properly called a priest, for priesthood means handling the sacred matter of life and death, which would fatally impair the brahmin’s transcendent stance, which requires him to cultivate the Veda in, by, and for himself alone. In fact, it was the brahmin, not the king, who was “secularized.”

Even though Vedic ritualism is peculiar to India, there are comparable developments elsewhere, most notably in ancient Iran. Of particular interest is the Iranian fire cult, closely related to Vedic sacrifice, which, as we will see, has all the features of a sacrificial fire cult. The interesting aspect of the comparison, however, lies not in their similarities but in the striking divergence of their development. Both start from the intimate relationship of man and fire—a relationship that may go back to the domestication of fire. But while the Iranian cult made the fire, immobilized in its temple, transcendental, its Vedic counterpart interiorized the sacrificial flame in one's inner Self, the *ātman*. In India it was not the fire but the Self that was transcendentalized. But in both cases it was reflective ritualism—anonymous in India, in Iran under the imprint of Zarathustra's prophetic genius—that broke the hold of sacrificial furor.

India and Iran are not the only examples of the breakup of the world of sacrifice. Nor was ritualistic reform necessary to bring about the breakup. Ancient Greece and Rome do not seem to have known a comparable kind of systematic ritualism. But it is ancient Indian ritualism (with its contrasting Iranian counterpart) that offers the clearest and by far the best documented case of such an "axial" breakthrough.<sup>15</sup>

To appreciate the incisive importance of the "axial" event one may think of cases in which it did not take place, for example, in the Celtic world. Although we know little, and only indirectly, of its sacrificial practice, it offers fascinating similarities with the ancient Indian world, not least regarding priesthood, warriorhood, and kingship. But for all its vigor and brilliance it does not seem to have produced a development comparable to Vedic ritualism. In fact, the Celtic world appears to have preserved a "singularly archaic state of society and religion."<sup>16</sup>

When, however, a breakthrough like Vedic ritualism did occur, it "disenchanted" a world held in thrall by the sacred brokenness of the contest. The final collapse of this broken world opened the way to the search for objective truth and rational order beyond the world of strife. Holding out to man the prospect of transcendence, it set him free to strike out on his own and reach for it.

# *Sacrifice*

## 1.1

“THERE IS NO SACRIFICE until we invent it.”<sup>1</sup> However, the same scholar who so boldly delivers us from the notion of sacrifice cannot help arguing against the primitive origins of animal sacrifice in the rites of the Paleolithic hunter.<sup>2</sup> Instead he connects it with the rise of animal husbandry and agriculture, since the typical sacrificial victim was not a wild, but a domesticated animal. Even though he dismisses his cogent arguments as no more than a brief indication, one wonders why he should bother to make them at all if sacrifice is merely an invention having no origin other than scholarly imagination. Obviously, no scholar can do without a solid fund of imagination and inventiveness, unless he is satisfied merely to list the bare facts from texts and ethnographic records without trying to tease some order out of them. In fact, the scholar I have been quoting, Jonathan Z. Smith, delights his readers with his imaginative handling of the bare facts.<sup>3</sup>

There remains, though, the question of whether we are still allowed unblushingly to talk about “sacrifice.” Another scholar, the classicist Marcel Detienne, confidently tells us that the notion of sacrifice is a thing of the past, “a category of the thought of yesterday.”<sup>4</sup> But even so neither can he avoid this outdated notion. After all, as he is quick to inform us, the laws of the ancient Greek cities prescribed that all meat offered for sale had to come from sacrificial immolation.<sup>5</sup> His criticism is aimed not at the notion of sacrifice per se but against the universality of sacrifice as a unitary institution that culminates in the god sacrificing himself. As such, he argues, sacrifice is no more than an arbitrary construct put together by scholars who thereby exhibit the lasting impact of the Christian tradition of the Lord’s Crucifixion and Resurrection they had themselves renounced.<sup>6</sup> Instead he intends to place sacrifice in its sociopolitical context as a paradigm for the type of social relations that the Greek *polis* was intended to stand for. This means that he must all but exclusively stress the element of food and its distribution. Sacrifice then becomes a matter of alimentary management, of “cuisine” rather than of worship. There is no gainsaying the socioreligious

aspect of food, its selections, production, preparation, and distribution. One may wonder, though, whether this is not too narrow a perspective; in the end it might be considered equally arbitrary.

The concept of sacrifice, then, whether deconstructed into an arbitrary collection of various elements, removed from its pivotal position in religion, or even struck from our vocabulary, appears hard to dispense with. It also has its staunch defenders. The two names that immediately spring to mind are René Girard and Walter Burkert, who by a curious coincidence published their major contributions on the subject in the same year.<sup>7</sup> The starting point for both is violence and the aggression arising from acute rivalry. The function of sacrifice, in their opinion, is to redirect such primordial urges at a chosen victim so as to provide the community with a regularized channel that saves it from total collapse through internecine strife. It is not surprising that the victim is surrounded by strong feelings of ambivalence: he is outcast and savior at the same time.<sup>8</sup> From this perspective we can easily understand why the king, because of his exceptional position, is often seen as the ideal (but not necessarily real) victim. Furthermore, not only does sacrifice save the community, it can even be seen as its founding principle. As Burkert puts it, “reciprocity is installed in a community through sacrifice, the sharing of guilt and the sharing of food,” while “fictional reciprocity is also seen to occur, from remuneration to resurrection.”<sup>9</sup> For Girard this motif is even more totalistic. He sees in the sacrifice of the victim as a scapegoat for society’s pent-up violence the starting point of the whole cultural and social order.

Faced with these closely argued and consequential studies, which in Girard’s case even purports to a total anthropology of civilization, it is hard to dismiss summarily the concept of sacrifice as a product of yesterday’s scholarly imagination. There are, however, obvious problems with the concept. To mention only one point, the Indo-European languages have no common root for “sacrifice.” Moreover, the bewildering variety of sacrificial practices and ideologies raises legitimate doubts as to whether we are indeed justified in bringing them all under the same heading. Adolf Jensen therefore made a sharp distinction between the original “killing ritual” (*Tötungsritual*) of archaic or primitive agricultural societies and the later sacrifices (*Opfer*) in the ancient civilizations.<sup>10</sup> It is the former, the killing ritual, that in Jensen’s view is the only meaningful act, for it reenacts—and thereby teaches—the primordial killing of the godhead that signified the end of the *Urzeit* and the founding of mortal and procreating mankind.<sup>11</sup> The reenactment of this catastrophic as well as founding primal event is, however, not associated with a gift to any god. In this it is essentially different from sacrifice in the ancient civilizations. The latter Jensen views as a late, no longer understood survival that has lost its meaning.<sup>12</sup> Incidentally, it is interesting that here the “sacrifice-to-god” is as good as meaningless, while the “sacri-

fice-of-god” is turned around from being the later, highest, development to the earliest and only meaningful form.<sup>13</sup> It seems, however, doubtful whether it would be helpful to split off “ritual killing” from sacrifice proper, even though the distinction is analytically useful.<sup>14</sup> It seems wiser to speak, with Walter Burkert, of a “family” of phenomena called “sacrifice,”<sup>15</sup> for it is still more than likely that we are dealing here with a ritual complex of great antiquity—whether we derive it from the experience of Paleolithic hunters or from the habits of Neolithic cattle keepers—and of wide geographic distribution that shows its resilience in its capacity for developing and evolving variant forms as well as penetrating thought. That this gives rise to difficulties of interpretation, not to say theoretical confusion, is not surprising.

There is, however, a voluminous corpus of texts, more than two thousand years old, that consistently deals with the institution of sacrifice. I am referring, of course, to the ancient Indian Veda, more specifically to the ritual prose texts, the *brāhmaṇas*, and ritual manuals, the *śrautasūtras* or “guidelines” for the practice of the “revealed” *śruti*. The existence of this corpus is well known, the texts have been published, some are available in translation, and the basic model sacrifices have been the subject of separate treatises.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, outside a small circle of Vedicists, little use has been made of this corpus since Hubert and Mauss published their celebrated *Essai* almost a century ago.<sup>17</sup> It is, to say the least, strange to see the massive Vedic evidence being overlooked—perhaps it is too massive?—and its central theme summarily dismissed. In what follows I therefore intend to call attention to ancient Indian thought on sacrifice.

## 1.2

Our difficulty in understanding the complex that we are wont to call “sacrifice” lies in the combination of its three major elements: killing, destruction, and food distribution. Each of these three elements requires a brief preliminary note.

Concerning the first element, killing, it might be argued that vegetal offerings, unlike animal sacrifice, do not require killing.<sup>18</sup> On this point, however, the ancient Indian texts at least leave no room for doubt. The pressing of the soma stalks, the killing and cutting up of the animal victim, and the grinding of the grain are all equally killings, and, to drive the point home, the text uses the verb *hanti*, “to slay, kill,” here.<sup>19</sup> It is not irrelevant that the sacrificial substance, whether animal or vegetal, is usually domesticated. In other words, it is an integral part of man’s own world, a product of man’s own efforts, and thus closest to man if not interchangeable with him. Conversely, there is no reason to stop short of human sacrifice. Indeed, the ancient Indian ritual texts take this concept in their stride when



detailing the rules for the *puruṣamedha*, the human sacrifice, which is modeled after the horse sacrifice. Even though the human victims are set free after their consecration along with the equally consecrated wild animals, it is significant that human sacrifice is far from being rejected out of hand.<sup>20</sup>

As regards the element of destruction, usually only a very small part of the sacrificial substance is destroyed, or at least withdrawn from normal use. There are various methods for accomplishing this—immersion in water, burying in the ground, or exposure on a tree, a mountain, or simply on the ground<sup>21</sup>—but the most radical way is to burn the part destined for destruction. This is also the best-known and most frequent method, and in Vedic sacrifice it is standard practice. Perhaps the important point about the use of fire for this purpose is not, however, its radical effect in destroying the oblation. Rather, what seems to be of overriding importance is the fact that man himself can make fire. He has, in other words, domesticated fire, as he later domesticated certain plants and animals. And, as in the case of domesticated plants and animals, the fire kindled by man very much belongs to him. We will return later to this point. Here let me only note that the Vedic ritual texts establish an intimate relationship between man and his fire—as they do regarding man and his cattle.

The third element is concerned with the distribution of the “goods of life,” that is, the food produced by the kill. The obvious importance of the element of food can easily draw our attention from the other elements of the sacrificial complex—as is the case also for the participants, for whom it is a solemn but no less joyously festive and, on occasion, even rowdy affair.<sup>22</sup> Thus, sacrifice can be seen as the solemnization of food and its distribution at a communal meal. As such it comes to be viewed not only as a social event but as a primary force in the formation and maintenance of human society. Whether one wants to see this in purely pragmatic terms, as Detienne proposes, or prefers to give full rein to the search for metaphysical implications in the tradition that leads from Robertson Smith to Girard would seem of secondary importance. The main point is the emphasis placed on the societal function of sacrifice. This emphasis is doubtlessly appropriate, but the question remains whether it enables us to understand the sacrificial complex as a whole.

Before going on, a word of caution is in order. Although the ritual complex we call sacrifice is evidently an old, established, and widely distributed one, it cannot be overlooked that it was not a ready-made, self-evident phenomenon. This is already clear from the fact that we do not find, until fairly late, a single word for sacrifice in any language but rather a scattering of terms, while related languages often do not derive such terms from the same roots. More serious still is the fact that there are well-known cases in which one of the three basic elements is missing. While killing is obviously a *conditio sine qua non* for animal sacrifice—as we saw, even the vegetal sac-

rifice is not exempt—either the element of destruction or of the meal is sometimes missing. Thus the holocaust or the biblical *‘olah* is wholly burnt without any part being eaten. Here oblatinal destruction has taken over from the otherwise normal meal, which in this case is strictly forbidden. Conversely, the Old Testament *pesach* lamb had to be wholly eaten without any oblation being made. The blood normally spent on the altar was in this case smeared on doorposts and lintels, while anything that remained had simply to be burnt afterward as disposal, not as an oblation.<sup>23</sup>

These instances show that the sacrificial complex is a compound of practices—not only of the three major elements that are usually found together but also of rites and customs such as exorcism, divination, expiation, healing, scapegoating—that can also stand by themselves. Yet the participants insist on the sacrificial character of such rites as the *pesach* lamb, which is called a “sacrifice (*zebach*) to God,” even though the oblation is ruled out.<sup>24</sup> If anything, this speaks for the dominance of the full sacrificial complex, resulting in deviating rites being brought under the same rubric as the full-fledged sacrifice. Similarly, other ceremonies had to be sanctified by sacrifice even if the latter had no connection with the ceremony to which they were appended.<sup>25</sup> Thus, for instance, the “ox-slaying” festival of the Greek town Magnesia, which has no oblation, is nevertheless called a *thusia*, “sacrifice,” and for good measure has been augmented by the insertion of three authentic *thusias*.<sup>26</sup> We may conclude then that the full ritual complex of sacrifice, though not a given, achieved an undeniable stability and persistence as well as worldwide distribution.

### 1.3

The dominance of the full-fledged ritual complex does not, however, mean that it is internally fully consistent. In fact, it contains a paradox involving the element of destruction, however minimal the amount of matter destroyed may be. While the connection of killing and food is understandable enough, it is unclear why even minimal destruction should be interposed between the killing—or, more solemnly, the immolation—and the meal. The obvious answer is that the part destroyed or withdrawn from human consumption is the gods’ portion. In this way sacrifice is linked with the gift: it is a transaction tying the supernatural powers into a network of reciprocity. Or perhaps the sacrificial gift is offered in atonement, in fulfilment of a vow, or out of a general feeling of indebtedness to the supernatural, all of which comes down to the same thing: establishing or maintaining a communications circuit. In itself this does not lack plausibility. It has led van Baal to see in the gift the essence of sacrifice as a means of communication with the supernatural: “All communication begins with giving, offering.”<sup>27</sup> Following Jensen, he therefore wants to exclude “rituals in which

every element of the gift or of atonement is utterly absent” from the notion of sacrifice. The latter, in van Baal’s view, is an “offering accompanied by the ritual killing of the object of the offering.”<sup>28</sup> In contrast to Jensen, for whom the *Tötungsritual* is the all-important feature, the one meaningful act is the offering—a simple offering without killing being equally valid. But then why sacrifice? It would be more reasonable to turn the animal loose, as indeed is still done in India today. Even if its owner does so for purely practical reasons, the bull turned loose is specifically dedicated to the god-head, usually Śiva.

It is curious that, for all the attention given to ritual killing, the study of sacrifice usually overlooks the element of destruction. It is this element rather than the killing of the sacrificial substance, whether animal or vegetal, that creates problems. The way out of the paradox is to view destruction as an offering to the gods. But so, we are made to believe, is the ritually killed victim. Why is there destruction on top of killing? There are admittedly good reasons to view the oblation as a gift to the gods. Thus, the Vedic sacrificer mutters the *tyāga* or “abandonment” formula, “This for god so-and-so, not for me,” when the small part destined for the deity is committed to the fire. One may even adduce the notion, sometimes expressed in the Vedic brāhmaṇa texts, that the smoke of the oblatinal fire goes up to heaven and returns again as rain from the clouds so as to make the earth bear fruit.<sup>29</sup> This represents a perfect, automatically effective circulation between the human and the heavenly worlds, set in motion by man through his sacrificial fire. But this applies to smoke in general, not exclusively to the smoke of the burnt offering. Moreover, the gods are not necessarily involved in the automatism of the circulatory chain. “This [terrestrial] world pours seed upwards from here as smoke, it becomes rain in yonder world and yonder world pours that rain from above.”<sup>30</sup> This can hardly support the idea of a gift to the gods.

But if the burnt offering is a gift, it is a disconcertingly meager one. The point was not lost on the practitioners of the burnt oblation, who often betray a distinct uneasiness about it. Thus, according to the Hesiodic myth that founds the distribution of shares in the sacrifice, Prometheus, in a contest of wits, tricks Zeus into accepting as the gods’ part the “white bones,” burnt with some fat and aromatics, while the nourishing meat and rich inner organs are allotted to mortals. It seems logical that in this way the immortals receive the incorruptible part of the slaughtered victim, whereas mankind is allotted the nourishing but utterly perishable part as its share.<sup>31</sup> One is what one eats, but it still took Prometheus’s superior trickery to establish the rule. At the other end of the Eurasian spectrum, in early classical China an authority confidently declares that “the gods enjoy the virtue [of the proceedings], not the taste.”<sup>32</sup> The morally exalted tone, as well as the context that emphasizes the value of pristine simplicity in sacrificial

worship, is of course entirely different from the Hesiodic tale. But here too it is clear that the meagerness of the oblatinal gift somehow must be explained. Many more examples could be cited, such as the answer of the Ngad'a of Flores who simply state that what is little for man is big for the gods and vice versa<sup>33</sup>—a fairly obvious rationalization based on the inverted relationship of the divine and the human worlds.

At any rate, it is clear that, although the participants are inclined to bring oblation and gift in line with each other, they are not as confident about it as one would expect. In this respect it is significant that the Indian scriptures make a clear-cut distinction between sacrifice and gift. Thus, in connection with the four ages of the world, it is stated that, while ascetism (*tapas*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) are appropriate to the first and the second ages, respectively (the *kṛta* and *tretā yugas*), sacrifice (*yajña*) is proper to the third (*dvāpara*). But in our own degenerate *kali* age only the gift (*dāna*) can be practiced, sacrifice being too much for our morally weakened condition.<sup>34</sup> Apart from what this tells us about the moral and material risks of sacrifice—it was, after all, a sacrifice that set off the total devastation of the epic Mahābhārata war and thereby brought about our present *kali* age—it is clear that sacrifice and gift are sharply distinguished from each other.

In passing it should be mentioned that the Vedic gods themselves are also sacrificers. As the Ṛgveda tells us in an enigmatically involuted phrase, “the gods sacrificed sacrifice by sacrifice; these were the first ordinances.” This celebrated line refers to the primordial immolation of the cosmic man, who is at the same time identified with the institution of sacrifice. Here sacrifice has no connection with any gift. Instead, it is the primordial act of cosmogonic violence. If one wants to call it by that name, it is a “killing ritual.” But this should not make us overlook the incontrovertible fact that this killing act is identified as the primordial sacrifice, *yajña*, even though all thought of a gift is totally absent. Indeed, the Ṛgveda verse is no less than the “charter” of sacrifice as an institution.<sup>35</sup>

The gift theory of sacrifice, then, is bound to run into trouble. Such a theory would work best in the case of a “killing ritual” followed by a communal meal—which is exactly what Jensen wanted to exclude from the concept of sacrifice. Strictly speaking there would be no separate gift, but rather the gods or ancestors would be taking part with the human participants in the communal feast. In fact, this appears to be the starting point of the Hesiodic myth. Originally gods and men sat convivially together at the communal meal until the contest about the parts of the victim definitively broke up the feast and set them irrevocably apart. Incidentally, Vedic ritual still appears to echo the original situation of conviviality. The gods are invited to come down to the feast (instead of having to wait for their share to go up in smoke). And indeed the brahmin priests who are the sacrificer's guests are identified at their installation with gods. In the same vein it was

and still is important to invite brahmins to a festive meal, at a marriage, for instance, or a funerary meal.

The notion of a gift of food to the gods could still be understood if the element of destruction went no further than a simple exclusion from human use by, say, exposure. Even so, one will still wonder how supernatural the gods have to be in order to enjoy food left to decompose. “Noble pourriture” is decidedly going over the top. When the gift to the gods not only requires a killing but is also conspicuously destroyed by fire, the paradox is inescapable. Yet it is this element of destruction, not the killing or the meal, that is the distinctive feature setting off sacrifice from the gift. We may even go one step further. If one wants to distinguish the “killing ritual” followed by a feast from sacrifice proper, the essential difference is not in the notion of a gift but in the destruction of what is supposedly given. One could then define sacrifice as a killing-cum-feast characterized by the destruction of part of the food. The clearest form of sacrifice would then be the one involving destruction by fire, which is the most widespread method.

It must be admitted, though, that the three elements that define sacrifice—killing, destruction, and feast—sit uneasily together. It is tempting to view the element of destruction, which causes our difficulties, as a later accretion somewhat arbitrarily pushed in between the kill and the feast. This is indeed the line taken up by Jensen. Although for him the distinctive feature of sacrifice is the gift to the gods and not the destruction of the gift, which does not enter into his discussion, he views sacrifice in relation to the older “killing ritual” as “a relatively unimportant, late and rationalizing re-interpretation.”<sup>36</sup> As we already saw, sacrifice is in Jensen’s view a no-longer understood survival that has lost the meaning so fully present in the original killing ritual. While recognizing the “successful developments” to which the older ideas, linked with the killing ritual of the early agriculturists, gave way, his verdict is that these developments are now impoverished and devoid of meaning. The loss of the original and essential idea, the *Kerngedanke*, easily results in absurdities, such as massive sacrifices with a spectacular number of victims.<sup>37</sup> We will, of course, not object to introducing a diachronic or evolutionist perspective. But if the result is that sacrifice is no more than the impoverished and misunderstood ritual killing that even comes to border on absurdity, we have not gained much in understanding.

From Jensen’s view of sacrifice we may retain, however, the notion that a gift to the gods is a comparative latecomer. But this does not tell us anything yet about the destruction of the supposed gift.

#### 1.4

More promising is the approach of Karl Meuli. Deriving sacrifice from the largely pragmatic customs of hunters, developed further by cattle keepers,

Meuli in his classic study of ancient Greek sacrifice points out that sacrifice is basically ritual slaughter complemented by the ensuing feast.<sup>38</sup> In itself this pattern does not involve the gift and its divine recipients. In many cases the god or gods who are concerned are not even mentioned, and, generally, the gift notion is shown to be secondary.<sup>39</sup> The “white bones” burnt with animal fat and aromatics that the Olympic gods received as their share is not so much a gift as a restoration of the slaughtered and cut-up victim. This, as Meuli argues, was the original idea with the hunting and cattle-keeping protosacrificers.<sup>40</sup> This can, of course, shade over rather smoothly into the gift, especially since the special treatment of the bones, though not a gift to the gods, is, in Meuli’s view, a giving back to the slaughtered animal what essentially belongs to it so as to restore or regenerate it. But the specific notion of the gift has made its way into the Olympian sacrifice from another area, the cult of the ancestors in which feeding and gift giving by the living have their proper place.<sup>41</sup> This is what Meuli calls the feeding sacrifice (*Speisungsoffer*), as distinct from the food sacrifice (*Speise-Opfer*), the ritual slaughter-cum-festive-meal of the Olympian cult.

This leaves us still with the disturbing element of destruction, especially destruction by fire of the burnt oblation, for the food that is to maintain the dead is not committed to the flames but left intact. Here Meuli distinguishes a third form of sacrifice, the destruction sacrifice (*Vernichtungsoffer*) belonging to the sphere of the sinister chthonic powers.<sup>42</sup> Under the same rubric he identifies the burning sacrifice, especially the holocaust, and the desperate self-sacrifice of the warrior who seeks death in battle after killing and burning his kith and kin together with his possessions. Meuli finds the origin of such destruction rituals in the frenzied rage of mourning. The chthonic *Vernichtungsoffer*, thus, is connected with the cult of the dead in which the holocaust sacrifice, directly parallel to the cremation, can primarily be found. And here too, as Meuli argues, the notion of the gift—favored by the customs of burial goods, food, and other cares spent on the dead—could make itself strongly felt already early on. In this way we can see the gradual association of gift and destruction, though coming from different sources, with the burnt oblation which is carried over from the cult of the dead and from frenzied mourning rites to the Olympian sacrifice to which such emotion is quite unrelated.<sup>43</sup>

This genetic scheme can plausibly account for the formation, out of disparate and even incongruous elements, of the sacrificial complex of killing, destruction, and feast held together, however tenuously, by the notion of the gift. There remains, however, some doubt. Although plausible, it is a somewhat random and accidental collection of unrelated elements. This in itself need not surprise us: the random and accidental cannot be denied their part in the formation of ritual complexes. But it makes it hard to explain the worldwide spread and the remarkable persistence of the sacrificial

complex. And why should the transfer of ideas and practices take place only in one direction, from the cult of the dead and the chthonic powers to the worship of the gods? But above all it presents the aporia of a gift that must be destroyed in order to be a gift. And even apart from the gift, the destruction breaks the otherwise consistent sequence of killing and feast in the middle. The complex lacks the inner consistency that can explain its persistence.

But has the sacrificial complex really been so haphazardly put together? Could there not be a single, more consistent pattern? It would seem, to begin with, that the division in Olympian *Speise-Opfer*, chthonic *Vernichtungsoffer*, and *Speisungsoffer* for the dead may be all too neat. To be sure, there is no reason to doubt the opposition of the Olympian or celestial to the chthonic; and it is certainly analytically relevant to distinguish between food, feeding, and destruction sacrifices. But Meuli has himself already commented on the striking similarity of the feasting of the dead and the sacrifices for heroes and for gods.<sup>44</sup> Walter Burkert follows this up by observing that the dichotomy of chthonic as against Olympian sacrifices does not fit the evidence, there being sacrificial banquets in the cult of gods explicitly called chthonic while there are holocausts even for the Olympian Zeus.<sup>45</sup> His final conclusion is that, “most of all, the opposition between Olympian and Chthonic constitutes a polarity in which one pole cannot exist without the other and in which each pole receives its full meaning from the other.”<sup>46</sup> But if this is so, it suggests a unitary pattern rather than a circumstantial chain of transfer from the cult of the dead via that of the heroes to the gods of a chthonic nature and eventually to other gods as well. Such transfers from the chthonic to the Olympian cult—but, strangely, not in the opposite direction—would make one expect a greater unity to develop. However, the development seems to have gone the other way around. As Burkert has observed, the contrast between Olympian and chthonic “was obviously further sharpened and developed in the historical period.”<sup>47</sup> So, an original unitary pattern in which the chthonic and the Olympian cultic forms were equally present seems more likely than the neat division of their respective spheres allows.

But the most telling point is that originally the Olympian *Speise-Opfer* did contain, together with white bones and fat, burnt oblations of meat—a feature otherwise deemed characteristic of the chthonic sacrifice. Here there does not seem to be a transfer. As Meuli notes, this custom appears to have completely disappeared in post-Homeric times—possibly in connection with the sharpening of the chthonic-Olympian divide.<sup>48</sup> The meat portions, instead of being committed to the sacrificial fire, were later assigned to the priests. We finally come around, then, to an original unitary pattern of killing, destruction, and feast, irrespective of the possible areas from which its elements may have been drawn.

But this still leaves us with the question of the paradoxical destruction. To explain it we shall have to look elsewhere. Discussing the widespread sacrifice of the first fruits in which usually not a part but the whole of the material is offered up,<sup>49</sup> Walter Burkert observes that it is "quite irrelevant to whom and how" these offerings are made. In Greece, they may be given to any god. Further, "such gifts may be deposited at a holy place . . . or they may be annihilated, most commonly by immersion in springs, ponds, rivers or the sea . . . , or, in a more spectacular way, they may be burned."<sup>50</sup> The irrelevance of the recipient and of the place of the offering makes one wonder whether it is a gift at all. At most it is a deposit "for whom it may concern." Only one thing is clear: "The offerings are definitively withdrawn from the competence of ordinary man," as Burkert puts it, if not directly annihilated. In this connection he refers to the story of Alexander the Great's spontaneous reaction when offered the last helmetful of drinking water before his thirsting army. Instead of drinking, he poured it out into the sand of the Gedrosian desert. Nobody, not even the *princeps*, "the one who takes first," should have it. In a similar way Burkert interprets the offering of the first fruits: "Neither the precious Ego, nor any human competitor is to get the first fruit, or the first calf born, or even the most beautiful virgin of the year."<sup>51</sup> This is the incontrovertible sign of the sacrificer's disinterest and self-abnegation, which by the same token should preclude all competition and conflict.

Here, it would seem, we hold the secret of the burnt oblation and, generally, of the element of destruction, whether by fire or otherwise. It is not primarily a gift or an offering of food to the gods but an abandonment *pur et simple*. Preceding the potentially competitive repartition of the shares at the festive meal it solemnly proclaims the sacrificer's lack of self-interest. The burnt oblation is the *aparchē*, the "first fruit" of the food-producing kill.<sup>52</sup> Obviously, the abandonment easily shades over into an offering to the gods, even if the identity of the god concerned is irrelevant, as in the Greek case. In Vedic ritual the abandonment, *tyāga*, of the part committed to the fire, is always in the name of the specific god to whom the sacrifice is destined and who thereby differentiates it from otherwise identical sacrifices. In this, however, the deity is no more important than the sacrificial substances that have a similar differentiating function. For the later theorists of the Mīmāṃsā, the deity is a necessary item, but only as the unavoidable addressee of the abandoned matter. As such his role is a subordinate one. Nor is the deity supposed to effect anything.<sup>53</sup> The one efficacious element of the sacrificial process or "work" (*karma*) is the abandonment as such, irrespective of the particular deity.

This can also make us understand the elaborate attention given by the Vedic ritualists to the element of destruction, the burnt oblation, which for them is the *pradhāna* or central part of the sacrificial procedure at the ex-



pense of the two other major elements. The killing has been literally marginalized—it takes place outside the sacrificial enclosure—and is stripped of bloodletting; the animal is smothered, not decapitated as it originally was and still is in popular practice. At the other end the festive meal has been utterly reduced; the bulk of the food is taken outside the enclosure and consumed when the ritual has been concluded. Only the abandonment of the oblation to be destroyed in the fire remains as the one effective feature.

From this perspective the aporia of the gift that is destroyed dissolves: there was no gift to begin with but only abandonment in self-abnegation. Although it is perpendicular to the line leading from the killing to the feast it has its logical place in the sacrificial complex. It demonstrates the sacrificer's lack of self-interest as regards both the unavoidable slaughter and the ensuing meal.<sup>54</sup>

### 1.5

If the element of destruction can be understood without invoking the notion of a gift to supernatural beings, there is still the question: Why the burning? Given the many ways in which the part to be abandoned can be withdrawn from man's use, why should the fire have achieved such prominence as the means for doing so? Before going into this question we need first to look into some features that may have contributed to the fire's prominence.

At this point we must return to a feature of the fire already noted in passing. Fire produces smoke. Rather than heat and light, smoke is the sign, the "banner" (*ketu*) of fire. Where there is smoke, there is fire—an observation that provided classical Indian logic with its standard example of inference. Significantly, the word for sacrifice in Greek religion is *thusia*, from the verb *thuein*, "to smoke." Here it is the burnt oblation of bones, fat, and aromatics that is the essential part of the proceedings and which gives them their name. Early classical China offers an interesting parallel. There too it is the smoke of animal fat burnt with fragrant wood that is addressed to the denizens of heaven. "At the burnt oblation they made the smell of the fat visible by kindling artemisia wood and in this way they showed their gratefulness to the aetherial spirits."<sup>55</sup> The chthonic spirits, on the other hand, were assigned the heavy, meaty parts of the victim (liver, lungs, head, and heart), which were not burnt, but buried in the sacrificial enclosure. Ursula Cedzich, to whom I owe this information, makes it clear that the essential point is the smoke as such. In Taoist ritual the animal victim was replaced by the fragrant smoke of the incense burner. Interestingly, she also draws attention to another use of smoke that is not necessarily related to offering and communication with heavenly beings, namely,

fumigation in the purification of the home, of clothing, and also of persons.<sup>56</sup> In the same vein the use of smoke for the annihilation of pests as well as the elimination of ritual impurity is a well-known theme in early Chinese literature. During the Han period, fumigation of garments with fragrant smoke was a daily item of court etiquette. It is here that the immediate antecedent of the use of incense in Taoist ritual is to be found.

In this connection the special incense burner in the form of a miniature mountain, decorated with animals and immortals, may be mentioned. Kristofer Schipper cautiously suggests that "its context of paradises of the immortals and 'far journeys' makes one wonder whether purification through fumigation was the only aim of the burner. At least one source tells us that . . . also hemp, *ma*, was used as an ingredient. Staying in a closed room filled with hemp smoke may indeed have induced ecstasy."<sup>57</sup> But even without the hallucinogenic potential of particular kinds of smoke, fumigation and olfaction are given high profile. They appear here as features in their own right, almost independent of the fire and its destructive power.

The Iranian (Parsi) fire cult—which does not use the fire's destructive capacity and, apart from tending the fire with animal fat, rejects the burnt oblation—sets great store by fragrant wood and frankincense. Fueling sacred fire in Parsi worship is known as *bui dādan*, "to offer fragrance."<sup>58</sup> In ancient Greece prominence was given to olfactory smoke. The "fragrant altar" is a well-known Homeric stereotype. Here, as in the Chinese case, yet another aspect comes to the fore, namely the "pneumatic" nature of smoke and its connection with air or wind and breath. And this again leads us to *thumos*, usually translated as spirit or soul, which contains the same root found in *thusia* and *thuein*.<sup>59</sup> Indian thought has further elaborated this association. The connection of breath (*prāṇa*) is there turned into an identification, the five *prāṇas* being the inner fires that digest and "recycle" the food as is the case of the so-called *prāṇāgnihotra*, the offering in the fire of the (five) breaths, *en clair*: solemnly taking one's meal.<sup>60</sup> But here we pass beyond the realm of Vedic sacrifice.

It is striking, though, that Vedic ritual appears insensitive to the fire's smoke, fragrant or otherwise. There is, to be sure, the speculative idea of a circulatory chain of fire, (damp) smoke, cloud, and rain,<sup>61</sup> but the ritual as such is not in any way concerned with the smoke. Perhaps we may recognize the remnant of a concern with olfaction in the prescription to feed the newly kindled fire with a mixture of (dry) herbs and in the specifications of the various kinds of wood to be used as fuel, but this can at best be only conjecture.<sup>62</sup> The texts do not tell us anything of the kind. And when the fire is called *vahni*, the carrier (of the burnt oblation), it is the fire itself, not the smoke, that is the carrier, as it is also the fire that is requested to act as a herald charged with bringing the gods to the feast arranged by their human hosts.<sup>63</sup>

Incidentally, the ancient Indian case underlines once more the precariousness of the gift notion. The idea of the gods being invited to the festive meal does not quite tally with the burnt oblation being sent upward to the gods' celestial abode by means of the fire. If the gods are supposed to participate in the common meal, adding a special dish of burned food seems somewhat superfluous if not downright inappropriate. This consideration, notwithstanding the Vedic disregard of the smoke and its olfactory possibilities, seems indirectly to support fumigation as a likely origin, at least in part, of the burnt oblation. Moreover, producing "a sweet savour unto the Lord," as the Old Testament phrase has it, would seem more likely to give rise to the notion of the gift, or at least of communication, than the uncommunicative reduction of the supposed gift to ashes.

Could not the appetizing smell of the smoke, especially when fragrant firewood was being used, have been part of the festive meal? If so, there would be no need to see the burning of sacrificial matter as an act of destruction. However, one cannot but wonder whether the smell of burnt meat is all that appetizing. It seems distinctly odd that perfectly good meat and other foodstuffs should be burnt to produce a starkly reeking effect of doubtful pleasantness. Although one may enjoy the smell of a well-done roast, and even though the line between well-done and overdone may be a thin one, burning the roast to ashes is certainly overdoing it. There is no need to invoke a high degree of sacredness or taboo to explain the prohibition against consuming the charred remains of a holocaust sacrifice.

Although they will have to be counted as formative elements, smoke and smell, and their possible uses such as fumigation, cannot by themselves explain the burnt oblation. There still is the act of destruction, however minimal the part destroyed may be. The burnt oblation can perhaps best be viewed as a combination of fumigation and destruction. This may help us understand, at least in part, the preference given to fire as a means of destruction or withdrawal from human use. Other means—immersion, burying, exposure—that are often combined with the use of fire, as when, for instance, the burnt bones are buried, do not offer the advantages of fumigation. The combination of destruction and fumigation is, however, not as adventitious as it may seem. Smoke and smell, no less than heat and light or ashes (and let us not forget sound) are integral to the overall manifestation of fire.

This brings us back to our first experience of fire, before its domestication. In his recent study of the domestication of fire Johan Goudsblom has drawn attention to the role of the natural bushfire.<sup>64</sup> It not only causes panic and flight but also offers immediate advantages. Birds of prey and other predators seize and devour partly charred but still edible animals and fruits in the ashes. It may have taught early hominids the advantages of broiling and roasting, including the possibility of preserving the roasted

consumables for a period of many days. It may well be that the burnt oblation, and especially the holocaust offering, preserves something of this primeval experience and its learning effects. The archaic way of baking the sacrificial cake or *puroḍāśa* does seem to recall this experience. Although the use of potsherds heated in the fire implies advanced skill in the handling of fire, covering the cake with ashes and glowing coals and especially the ritual act of holding burning grass or other combustible material over it as well as the *paryagnikarāṇa*, the circling of a burning coal around the cake or the victim symbolically surrounding it with fire, suggest the natural bushfire.<sup>65</sup>

The bushfire combines a number of features—heavy smoke and strong smell attracting predators and providing usable food, as well as fertilizing the soil with the ashes to further fresh vegetation. Man's control over fire enabled him to divide the complex of the natural fire, singling out and recombining its features so as to put them to optimal advantage. While natural fire will do, or rather threatens to do, all manner of things—roasting, destroying, clearing, smoking, drying, melting, heating, carbonizing, calcining, lighting, exploding, scaring off as well as attracting—indiscriminately and at the same time, domestication means not only making fire but also the technique of separating its effects from each other and harnessing them to specific, ever-more specialized uses. In the act of being separated out, these uses are by themselves already new ones leading to further innovations.

So also is the burnt oblation. We have seen that it derives from the features of smoke and of destruction. While smoke led to fumigation, the natural fire's destructive capacity could be manipulated for waste disposal. It may at first sight seem crudely irreverent, but waste disposal as a formative element of the burnt oblation cannot be discarded out of hand. Thus the remainder of the *pesach* lamb, as we saw, was to be disposed of by burning. Although this decidedly was not meant to be an oblation, it did serve the same purpose of withdrawing it from consumption. We may think here also of the Taoist "sacrifice of scripture" with which Kristofer Schipper has familiarized us. The written orders and documents produced in the sacred area as part of the ritual are in the end brought outside and burned.<sup>66</sup> Although the burning easily translates itself into a transmission of orders and other documents to their ethereal addresses—just as the burnt food oblation came to be viewed as a gift to the gods—it is hard not to see here in the background the purpose of disposal beyond the reach of human use or abuse.

Here yet another effect of the fire must be considered. Fire leaves behind ashes, which can be used in various ways. Thus, to mention only one obvious use, if a fire is to be kept permanently alive, it needs a deep bed of ashes. This, it would seem, is the pragmatic background for the ritual use made of ashes in both Iran and China. In the Iranian fire cult as practiced

by the Parsis, the ashes of the sacred fire are carefully removed and preserved to be supplied to the different subordinate fire temples under the jurisdiction of the great temple.<sup>67</sup> Similarly in China, temples and communities are affiliated through the institution known as “sharing the incense.” When a new group is formed, ashes from the incense burner in the sanctuary of the parent community are given to the newly formed group to put in its own incense burner.<sup>68</sup>

In India, by contrast, although ashes find various ritual uses—not to speak of the funerary rites concerning human ashes—Vedic ritual all but completely disregards them, as it does the smoke of the fire.<sup>69</sup> Here the burning is the one feature singled out for attention. In this manner the fire’s function of burning the abandoned part of the sacrificial viands has been maximally emphasized. The Iranian fire cult, even more than its ancient Indian near relative, spends all its care on the bright flame kept permanently burning. But, discarding the fire’s destructive potential, it gives a special place to fragrance and to ashes. Greek sacrifice, at least in its Olympian form, has reduced destruction to the calcination of the bones and has no particular use for the ashes. It does, however, give much attention to the fragrance of the smoke. The Taoist cult again does not feature either the flame or its destructive power but maximizes instead the incense burner while using its duly preserved ashes for setting up networks of affiliation.

Ritual, then, set the pattern for control of the fire by separating its various features and putting them to specific uses. Each cult makes and develops its own choice: Vedic India stresses destruction; Zoroastrian Iran gives priority to the flame (but, for all the importance of fragrance, not to the smoke as such); ancient Greece combines destruction (limited to the bare bones) with the fragrant smoke; Taoist China goes all out for the fragrance of the incense burner and the ashes left in it.

This brief survey should help us understand what features of the fire contributed to its prominence in sacrifice, and especially to the burnt oblation: fumigation, destruction (possibly derived from waste disposal), and the remaining ashes. But they cannot fully explain the intimate connection of sacrifice and fire. The connection appears to be if not adventitious at least less self-evident than one might be inclined to believe. In fact, sacrifice can do without fire. Even the preparation of the sacrificial viands—for instance, liquids, such as the Vedic soma beverage, or fat and various dairy products—does not in all cases involve fire. The features singled out and elaborated in ritual seem to point rather to a fire cult in its own right. Indeed, the Iranian case shows us a fire cult that, even if it does not reject animal sacrifice, is not dependent on it either.

Yet it is clear that sacrifice and the cult of the fire are almost inextricably tied to each other. Even the Zoroastrian fire worship refers to and is viewed as “sacrifice”—note, for instance, the oblation of animal fat that, even if it

does not formally and explicitly involve animal sacrifice, does require slaughter.<sup>70</sup> The reason for the close association, even near identity of sacrifice and fire cult is not in their intrinsic elements or features but in their identical context, that is, in domestication.

### 1.6

We have noted already the clearly marked context of domestication in which sacrifice flourished. This has even led Jonathan Z. Smith to suggest that “sacrifice is an exaggeration of domestication, a meditation on one cultural process by another.”<sup>71</sup> In precise terms, Smith means that a commonplace activity of pastoral and agrarian man is “obsessively and intellectually elaborated in sacrifice”: “Sacrifice is an elaboration of the selective kill, in contradistinction to the fortuitous kill” as practiced by the hunter. Of course, the “selective kill” by the sacrificer would seem to be the reverse rather than the exaggeration of the domesticator’s operation, for the sacrificer is bound to select the animal also best suited to his everyday purposes, for instance, breeding, not an animal whose only purpose is to be killed off. But one might consider that such a reversal makes the sacrificial reflection on domestication even more serious. In fact, one could get quite a bit of speculative mileage out of this consideration. But for our purposes the point of interest is the idea of sacrifice as a reflective, “second-order” domestication, a domestication of domestication. Whether the connection of sacrifice with the domestication of certain plants and animals can be validly understood in this way is, of course, a matter of speculation, but the connection itself need not be doubted. Neither need the connection with hunting rituals—which have left telling traces in Vedic ritual—be rejected, as Smith wants us to do.<sup>72</sup> It is clear, though, that domestication created an entirely different context. At any rate, this should remind us that the acts, gestures, and utterances that make up sacrifice and ritual derive from pragmatic and commonsensical but no less vitally important concerns and activities.

Not only were selected animal and plant species domesticated; most centrally, and first of all, fire was domesticated. One may even wonder whether the domestication of plants and animals would have been attempted without the possession of fire. At any rate, it would not have been the same thing and would have been hardly worth the effort. It is then not so surprising that the Vedic ritual texts often speak about the fire as if it were an animal. It gets tired, worn out (*jīryati*), like a draft animal, and must be released after its sacrificial service.<sup>73</sup> The fire can even figure as an animal victim,<sup>74</sup> and when the fire, as is so often the case, has withdrawn and gone into hiding and dispersal, the gods must bring it together again by showing it the various forms of cattle, which are the fire’s own (dis-

persed) forms, so that “he will reveal himself unto his own form.”<sup>75</sup> Conversely and more down to earth, cattle follows the fire, as a Vedic prose text makes clear,<sup>76</sup> and the intimate connection of the sacrificer’s fire with cattle is repeatedly stressed, possibly reflecting the fire in the cattle corral that wards off predators during the night. Thus, it is said that the fire, Agni, “rules over the cattle, and they lie round him on all sides”; only by pleasing him and thereby obtaining his consent can an animal be given away.<sup>77</sup> Notwithstanding its often emphasized immortality, the fire is also afraid of death, as is borne out by the tale of the three brothers of Agni, who had succumbed under their sacrificial function. Agni can only be persuaded to take up his function again by the promise of immortality and a share in the sacrifice.<sup>78</sup> The fire, then, is clearly put on a par with the other domesticates. But, still more, it is identified with man and his mortality.

The relationship between a man and his fire is a highly personal one characterized by maximal nearness. “My first name, o Jātavedas, that my father and mother gave me in the beginning that you must bear till my return; I shall bear your name.” The paterfamilias should utter this mantra when leaving home, and on his return the exchange is reversed: “My name and your name, o Jātavedas, exchanging them like clothes, these we should put on again, each his own.”<sup>79</sup>

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa describes the domestication of the fire as a compact. Having been created or rather “released” by the Lord of Creatures, Prajāpati, together with the other creatures (*prajā*), Agni started to burn the whole creation, while the creatures set out to crush him. Agni, unable to endure this, then proposed the compact: “I shall enter you; having given birth to me you must maintain me; as you will give birth to me and maintain me, so I shall give birth to you in yonder world.”<sup>80</sup> “Giving birth” here refers to the rite of producing fire by means of the fire drill for the purpose of sacrifice—a rite replete with sexual symbolism. In this way the fire is said to be man’s son. At death the relationship is reversed, for “when they place him [the deceased] on the funeral pyre, he is born again out of the fire and the fire that before was his son is now his father.” The fire can, in other words, be considered as its owner’s “external soul.”<sup>81</sup> One’s fire, therefore, is the object of obsessive care. It should not be lost, nor should it be mixed with another fire, and certainly not with the untamed forest fire. But at the same time there is a built-in hostile tension, as our Śatapatha passage bears out. The “compact” should deal with the mutual hostility by dissolving it in alternating phases: the fire penetrating man and being given birth by him, man penetrating the fire on his death and being reborn out of it in the hereafter. For all the intimacy, the fire remains a dangerous, self-willed element that easily gets out of hand and threatens its owner, as every inexperienced cook must learn at his peril. It is specifically the sacrificial fires that are threatening. They lust after the flesh of their

owner, the sacrificer, so we are told, and must be placated by animal sacrifice at least once a year.<sup>82</sup> The fire is the enemy within.

While fire and man, as well as fire and cattle, are tied in with each other, the relationship of man and his cattle is no less intimate. Indeed, man is himself a *paśu*, an animal fit for sacrifice. So we should expect his relationship with his cattle to be equally problematic as in the case of his fire. The gods, seeing that everything depended on the cow, wanted to protect it against rain, cold, and heat. So they flayed man and put his hide on the cow. That is why man so easily bleeds. Therefore too a man should not be naked in front of his cattle, because they would run away for fear that he would take back his hide.<sup>83</sup> This certainly reflects the intimacy of man and his cattle. But it also tells us that man was flayed—as indeed the sacrificial victim is—for the benefit of his cattle. Domestication, then, is not a one-way road to absolute control. However tame, cattle are prone to run away, which is also a standard motif in the mythology of the fire. Although the unresolved tension is not as immediately catastrophic as it is in the case of man's fire, it is no less serious. For the long-suffering cow may revert to the undomesticated state and turn into a ferocious beast. Thus, the rejected gift cow (*dakṣiṇā*) stands like a furious lioness between the two parties, threatening to attack both. She has to be placated, or redomesticated, by making her the *uttaravedi*, the mound supporting the oblational fire and center of the sacrifice.<sup>84</sup>

Domestication thus brings about an intricate web of intimate relationships between man and fire, man and cattle, cattle and fire, and finally man and man, donor and donee. These relationships, however, are far from evoking a pristine Arcadia. They are tense, even paradoxical, and continually shifting. It is against this background that we may arrive at a fuller understanding of the burnt oblation and, generally, of the close connection between fire cult and animal sacrifice. Their interweaving reflects the intricate mesh of man, fire, and cattle.

Of particular interest in this respect is the disposal of the dead. It does not seem fortuitous that the various ways in which the body of the deceased is disposed of are the same as those used for abandoning the oblation: exposure, burying, immersion, and burning.<sup>85</sup> In Vedic India burning followed by burying the ashes, or scattering them at a spot ringed with stones, was the approved method. But immersion—the ashes, or mostly the charred body, being abandoned to float down the Ganges or another stream—is the general practice as any casual visitor to the burning *ghats* can see. But whether combined with burying or immersion, burning is the essential part of the proceedings—as it is in sacrifice. Indeed, the sacrificer's cremation is his last sacrifice at which he is himself the holocaust oblation (*puruṣāhuti*).<sup>86</sup> In the ultimate oblation the tense and ambivalent relationship of man, as a *paśu* or animal victim, and his fire is finally resolved. Sim-



ilarly, the fire ends its service with the householder's and sacrificer's death, not to be rekindled again.

It might be objected that the meat offered as a regular oblation has been cooked.<sup>87</sup> At the cremation, however, the fire consumes the corpse raw together with a cow or a goat equally burned raw. Hence, the cremation fire's epithet is *kravyād*, "eater of the raw."<sup>88</sup> But the significant point is that cremation is viewed as an *āhuti*, an oblation in the fire. And, interestingly, as such it is not addressed to any god or gods. It is an abandonment to destruction by the fire.<sup>89</sup>

It is, however, not the dramatic efficacy of the fire's destructive power that is decisive. It is the identification of man with his fire and his cattle that gives destruction by burning its special quality over and against other ways of abandonment. As man's alter ego in life and death the fire implies man himself, who is both sacrificer and *paśu*.

### 1.7

It would be easy to conclude that sacrifice and its distinctive feature, the burnt oblation, were meant to resolve the tensions and ambiguities built into man's domesticated world. But we would then still have to clarify exactly how this is achieved. Perhaps sacrifice does not resolve these tensions at all. We should remember that the feast that concludes sacrifice does not always restore peace and harmony. It may also occasion new tensions and a renewal of strife, as we saw in the case of the rejected *dakṣiṇā* gift. Rather, sacrifice raises tension to an abnormally high pitch. The use of fire both for preparing the food and for destroying it reflects the inner tension. Cooking the food and disinterested abandonment are each in themselves fairly commonsensical acts. But it is their fixed and standardized combination that makes sacrifice hive off from the ordinary. The insistence on the abandonment to destruction as gift turns it into a paradox. On the other hand, other aspects of burning that would lessen the prominence of destruction—such as disposal, olfaction, or use of ashes—are conspicuously left out. Everything seems geared to highlight the paradoxical nature of sacrifice. Lifting commonsensical activities out of their diffuse, everyday context, sacrifice specifies them and pits them against each other in an enigmatic pattern. But it can only do so by creating its own autonomous stage.

Sacrifice, then, can perhaps best be seen as a "play" that makes the tensions and uncertainties visible by breaking them down into separate well-defined acts and throwing their ambiguity into relief.<sup>90</sup> In this way it turns tension into conflict, ambivalence into paradox, uncertainty into impending disaster, and disaster into triumph. The victim is not just killed, but must go willingly to its death; it is "made"—"to make" being a standard expression for sacrificing—but in fact it is finished;<sup>91</sup> the common feast proclaims solidarity but the participants jealously look for some slight in

the seating or the apportioning of the shares while at the same time fearing they will be overburdened by the obligations of reciprocity;<sup>92</sup> the patron's lack of self-interest is apparent in his abandonment, but it is only a token abandonment, and his disinterest is belied by his eager expectation of reciprocity, the fervent wish that "the sacrifice may come to him again;"<sup>93</sup> the faithful fire, the sacrificer's *alter ego*, may be stolen, go out, or simply malfunction;<sup>94</sup> finally, the whole sacrifice may be disturbed and destroyed by a slighted or uninvited guest,<sup>95</sup> but the defeated sacrificer may still gain heaven.

It is "all in the game," for sacrifice is after all "only a play," that is, "a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being not serious, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly."<sup>96</sup> As such it is, in principle, restricted to its own proper boundaries of time and space, outside everyday reality. But although it is "not serious" in the everyday sense, there can be no doubt about the earnestness of such play. As Johan Huizinga put it: "You can deny nearly all abstractions: justice, beauty, truth, goodness, mind, God. You can deny seriousness, but not play."<sup>97</sup> And the stakes are quite real. In the play of sacrifice they are the "goods of life"—that is, bluntly speaking, food and cattle—as against death. Here we encounter the fundamental issue.<sup>98</sup> Sacrifice deals in the earnest way of play with the insoluble conundrum of life and death. And for this reason sacrifice bears the mark of unresolved tension, of an inner rift. It sets off life against death and destruction, acknowledging both but without reaching a solution—for the simple but essential reason that there is no solution. Sacrifice can only pose the conundrum by spelling out the terms; it cannot solve it. Its outcome, therefore, must each time remain uncertain and ultimately indecisive. Therefore, too, sacrifice is and remains problematic to its participants no less than it is to us.

There is, yet, a persistent belief that, even as a play, sacrifice creates or represents order, bringing man and the cosmos in line with each other. Sacrifice is no doubt bound by conventions, the "rules of the game," for ordering the various items and successive acts that are lifted out of everyday reality. But this only concerns its own internal order, and this order is, as a matter of principle, restricted to its own proper boundaries of time and space. But, above all, at the heart of sacrifice there is the threat of catastrophe overthrowing all order, even its own order. If that happens, sacrifice overflows its bounds and invades ordinary reality with devastating effect. We have already seen in what ways sacrifice can miscarry, and indeed Vedic ritualist mythology tells many tales of sacrifice gone wrong. It is fraught with ambiguity and danger, and the participants know it. Thus, the sage Nārada tells the Pāṇḍavas, protagonists of the Mahābhārata, that the ancestors want them to perform the royal sacrifice of the *rājasūya* but at the same time warns them about the awesome risk of destruction that will carry the whole of the warrior race with it. And so indeed it happens. Moreover, to

top all ambiguities, when the righteous sacrificer and leader of the Pāṇḍavas, Yudhiṣṭhira, finally reaches heaven, he finds his enemy Duryodhana there, seated in glory. Even though this is said to be a delusion, the ambiguity is nonetheless clear. If ever there was a tale of sacrifice gone wrong, it is India's great epic.

Even when sacrifice is seen to celebrate and renew the primordial cosmogonic event, this event is always the violent breakup of a previous monolithic and static order. It releases the dynamics of divisiveness and conflict. Thus the cosmogonic sacrifice of the R̥gveda's *puruṣa* hymn involves the dismemberment of the primordial cosmic man, the *puruṣa*, the breaking down of the once unitary and stable universe into separate entities.<sup>99</sup> The Vedic prose texts further elaborate this theme. When the gods immolated the *puruṣa*, his essence went out and entered the horse. So they immolated the horse while they discarded "him whose essence had gone out" to become a *kimpuruṣa*, a subhuman unfit for sacrifice. Then the essence withdrew from the immolated horse to enter the ox, and so it goes on. In this way the gods successively split up the original unity into a double series of domesticated animals (horse, ox, goat) fit for sacrifice—and for eating—on the one hand, and of the denizens of the wilds (*kimpuruṣa*, *gāyal*, *śarabha*) unfit for sacrifice and consumption, on the other.<sup>100</sup> The original organic unity is parceled out, and this is accomplished by the violent procedures of sacrifice. In this way a new and different order is brought about, but it is a divisive and unstable one—one that creates opposition and conflict, as between the domesticated sphere and the wilderness.

Sacrifice, then, overthrows organic, unitary order. In doing so it activates and exploits the dynamic tensions of divisiveness and conflict to propel the world on a course of ever-new tension and conflict, thereby necessitating further sacrifices in an unending chain.<sup>101</sup>

This, it would seem, is what the Vedic ritualists expressed by making *kāma*, desire, the motive force behind both cosmogony and sacrifice. What this means is well illustrated by a rather simple and crude prose passage that is unlikely to find a place in anybody's anthology of favorite Vedic texts. The passage explains the sacrifice of a cow at New Year, on the *ekāṣṭakā* day. This cow is called *ksudh*, hunger: by killing this cow one kills hunger for the duration of the coming year. Although this appears quaintly simplistic, its background is downright unpleasant. We are told that the gods and their hostile counterparts, the asuras—the two parties in the broken-up and dualistic cosmos—each put up a cow as the prize in their ever-renewed contest. Both parties intend to cut off the head of the other party's cow in case of victory. This being mythology, the gods win and feast on the asuras' cow. Therefore, the text tells us, this cow is killed in the house of the victor. And it is this cow that is the cow called *ksudh*.<sup>102</sup> In other words, my hunger is your cow.

The text then shifts away from the dualistic tack to the monistic one of Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, who, being one, desired to become many. Meditating on himself he “released” out of himself the female Vāc, Voice, in the form of a cow, who again, being alone, created in the same way the Virāj cow who again repeated the same process to produce the Idā cow—that is, the cow of the sacrificial feast—who then finally created out of herself all the enjoyments of man. The basic message is clear. Desire is the prime mover in creating the world and propelling it into a progressive parceling out. And the process works through conflict. Or, as the monistic continuation of our text propounds, desire is turned inward. This is what is recommended to the one “who knows thus,” that is, he who knows the cow hypostases of Prajāpati that successively split themselves up. Reflecting on himself he should—like his prototype, the Lord of Creatures—arrive at producing out of himself the desired enjoyments. Foreshadowing later renunciatory withdrawal into the self, this can only mean an exclusive inner world of imagination, transcending the conflictive world of sacrifice. But in both cases desire is the motive force that makes the world, either the outer world through conflict or the inner world through internal splits.

In the play of sacrifice man acts out his awareness that he lives in a conflictive world broken by the irreparable rift of his mortality. He desperately strives to restore a primordial static unity, fusing life and death into an organic whole. But the dynamics of desire will force him out again to face death and destruction. When he puts together the thousand bricks into the five-layered Vedic fire altar in the form of a bird that will never fly, he attempts to reconstruct the dismembered body of the cosmic man who is at the same time Agni, the fire, his *alter ego*. But it is built to undergo the sacrifice again. And when all is over, the prestigious altar is, as the Nambudiri brahmins told me, a corpse, Agni’s dead body, never to be touched again.<sup>103</sup> The only thing man as a sacrificer can achieve is to divide and parcel out the broken world, as he cuts up and distributes the shares of the victim, those which are to be destroyed and those which are to be eaten by the participants. This certainly spells out an ideal order, but it cannot restore the primordial unity. It is a divisive order that carries the seeds of renewed tension and conflict. The best it can do is to make the order of division hold for the time and space of the sacrificial play. It may then be an occasion of joy and relief, but its effect will last only until the next round of the play, when life and death will again be at stake.

## 1.8

At this point we should briefly return to the theme of domestication. We have seen that sacrifice, as we know it from texts and ethnographic records, is intimately bound up with man’s domesticated world. The Vedic ritual

texts stress the opposition of *grāma*, “village,” that is, the domesticated world, and the world of the jungle, *aranya*. Sacrifice typically has its center in the *grāma*. As Charles Malamoud points out, sacrifice in brahmanic India is essentially an “affaire villageoise.” Its “village” character is determined by the fire, the cattle, and the cultivated plants that provide the basic apparatus of sacrifice.<sup>104</sup> Accordingly, the Vedic *corpus rituale* throughout speaks the language of cattle keeping, dairy production, and cultivation. This does not mean though that the jungle is excluded. Rather, it is one of the characteristic ambiguities of Vedic sacrifice that the jungle is both warded off as a dire threat and welcomed as a necessary complement to the domesticated world. While the latter is seen as the world of mortals, the wilderness is the world of the gods, but this equally means that the jungle spells death to man: “Surely the wild animal (*aranya*) is a non-*paśu*, an animal unfit for sacrifice; no offering should be made of it; if one would make offering of it, the sacrificer would die before long and be taken away to the jungle.” Still the wild cannot be left out, and so our text concludes that the wild animals—to be sacrificed together with domestic victims in the prestigious horse sacrifice—should be released after having been consecrated. In this way they are sacrificed and at the same time not sacrificed, this being the characteristic method of the ritual texts in setting up and handling ambiguity.<sup>105</sup>

In other words, the domesticated world of mankind cannot do without its opposite, the wild. In pragmatic terms, the latter provides pasture for cattle, wood for building, and fuel for fire, as well as the wooden sacrificial post put up at the eastern extremity of the sacrificial ground like a boundary mark, not to mention other forest products such as honey, wax, and herbs. Most of all, the soma plant—whatever its actual identity may have been—is emphatically a product of the jungle.<sup>106</sup> The main thrust is not just to ward off the jungle and its denizens but to bring them under the expansive control of the domesticated world, and that is why wild animals are needed for the horse sacrifice. Or, as the text quoted above tells us, by sacrificing both domestic and wild animals Prajāpati “conquered” both worlds, that of men and that of the gods, of domestication and of wilderness.

But the real way to conquer the other world of the wild is, of course, through the fire, as is shown by the story of Māthava Videgha and the fire, Agni Vaiśvānara (“common to all men”), that he held inside himself. His brahmin priest, however, teased it out of his mouth by mentioning ghee in a fire-kindling mantra. On the stimulus of the word “ghee” the fire flashed forth and rolled on to the east, burning everything before it, until it came to a stop at the Sadānīrā River—usually identified as the Gandak, a northern tributary of the Ganges. “At that time that [land] was quite uncultivated and waterlogged, for it had not [yet] been tasted by Agni Vaiśvānara. Nowadays, however, it is fully cultivated, for the brahmins have caused [Agni]

to taste it through sacrifices.”<sup>107</sup> So the sacrificial fire is the primary tool for domesticating the wild.

Even though sacrifice is firmly embedded in domestication, it is no less concerned with the undomesticated world of the wild. The very insistence that only a domesticated animal is a *paśu* fit for sacrifice suggests that the rule may well have often been honored in the breach. We do indeed find instances of wild animals as victims, as in the case of the horse sacrifice, which then gives rise to an elaboration of the ambivalent *grāma-aranya* relationship.

However, although the institution of sacrifice is not necessarily dependent on cattle-keeping and agriculture, it seems clear that the dense and ambivalent relationships of man, cattle, and fire have intensified the critical nature of sacrifice to the point of thoroughly changing its outlook.<sup>108</sup> Instead of being directed to the outside world of the wild, sacrifice now looks inward, accentuating the tensions of man’s domesticated world. And if it looks outward, it is either to ward off the wild or to integrate it into its own expansive world. The simple paradigm of killing, abandoning, and eating has been immeasurably complicated by the inextricable interdependence in which mankind is enmeshed to the point of submergence. Sacrifice threatens to overwhelm the sacrificer, who now is at one with the victim. Like the cosmic man, the *puruṣa* of the cosmogonic hymn, he is himself at stake. In this way we can also understand that the Vedic ritual texts generally consider man as the *paśu*, the sacrificial animal *par excellence*, the one most fit for sacrifice because he alone among all *paśu* both sets the sacrifice in motion and undergoes it.<sup>109</sup> Killing one’s animal is tantamount to bringing oneself to harm. The notion of self-sacrifice can hardly be avoided, and the Vedic ritual texts are indeed replete with it.<sup>110</sup> Accordingly, it is regularly stressed that the sacrificer must buy himself free (*niṣkrīṇāti*). It seems, however, doubtful whether we do justice to the situation when we view it as a simple “substitution.” Rather, it is a matter of tangled and blurred identity. Domestication intensifies the danger as well as the urgency of sacrifice. For in sacrifice the densely tangled relationships must be played out and disentangled.

To that end, however, man as a sacrificer must manipulate the organic order of his world. Forcibly raising himself above diffuse interdependence, he carves out his own universe in which he replaces the natural alternation of life and death with an artificial one of his own making.<sup>111</sup> The ambiguity of the claim is tellingly borne out by an enigmatic play on the verb *karoti*, “to make, to do,” which is also used for performing sacrifice.<sup>112</sup> As a preface to its exposition of the *idā* invocation—in fact, the call to partake of the sacrificial food—the Taittiriya Saṃhitā gives what amounts to a riddle. Manu, the archetypal sacrificer, was searching the earth for whatever was fit for sacrifice when he chanced upon a patch of “poured down ghee.” He

puts up the challenge: “Who is capable of making this also in sacrifice? (*ko <sup>3</sup>syēśvaro yajñe <sup>3</sup>pi kartoh*).” Mitra and Varuṇa take up the challenge, saying: “[It is] the cow, we are capable to make [her] (*gaur evāvam īśvarau kartoh*).” “Thereupon they set the cow in motion (*samairayatām*); wherever she stepped there she pressed out ghee; therefore she is called ‘ghee-footed’ (*ghṛtapadī*); that is her origin.”<sup>113</sup> The point is that the ghee-dripping *idā* cow is the victim that is immolated to provide the meat for the sacrificial feast. As such she stands for the sacrifice as a whole and her ghee-filled footprint is called the “head of the earth” and the original place of sacrifice.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, the role of Mitra and Varuṇa in solving the ritual riddle recalls the cow sacrificed for them after the completion of the soma sacrifice, the *maitrāvāruny anūbandhyā*.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the cow is “made” by setting her in motion to produce her ghee imprints on the earth, but in fact she is killed. The riddle of sacrifice is contained in the ambiguous play on the verb *karoti*.

The stage is set by the *adhrigu* formula. “Divine slaughterers as well as human ones take hold [of the victim], lead [it] up to the doors of sacrifice (*medhyā durah*), ordaining the sacrifice (*medha*) for the lord of sacrifice (*medhapati*); carry the fire before it [the victim], strew the grass [layer]; the [victim’s] mother should consent, consent the father, consent the uterine brother, consent the companion in the herd.”<sup>116</sup> Thus, the *adhrigu* formula lays down the law. As the animal is led up and formally removed from the web of organic relationships, so the artificial world of sacrifice is cut out from the natural order of things and set apart behind “the doors of sacrifice.” By strewing the grass the sacrificer artificially creates his own universe, which he then sets in motion by moving the victim that he will “make” into the nourishing support of life and by carrying the fire before it.<sup>117</sup> In this artificially created universe, the sacrificer not only follows the primordial example of the gods, he himself plays at being god, for the “lord of sacrifice,” though referring to the god or gods in whose name the sacrifice is performed, is declared to be, in fact, none other than the sacrificer.<sup>118</sup>

It is in man’s pretensions to “make” and “set in motion” life when in fact he slaughters rather than in the killing *per se* that the enormity and the critical danger come out. Endeavoring to manipulate—as different from solving—the riddle of life and death, the sacrificer raises himself, in a sort of Münchhausen act, above normal, everyday life to be the godhead, the “lord of sacrifice.” But at the same time he remains intimately and dangerously enmeshed with the fire and the animal.

The critical nature of his position is summarily described by a brāhmaṇa passage: “The fire is Rudra [the god of the wild who stands for the destructive power of fire]; the sacrificer is the victim, the *paśu*. If he [the priest] would make fire after taking hold of the victim [for immolation], he would put the sacrificer also [in the control of] Rudra and he would be

liable to die.”<sup>119</sup> The ritualistic solution is to drill the fire after the animal has been led to the sacrificial post but before it is actually immolated. In this way, the text tells us with typical ritualistic ambiguity, the animal “is neither taken hold of [i.e., immolated] nor not taken hold of.” For our purpose here the interesting point is not the ambiguous solution of doing and at the same time not doing, but the all-but-inextricable clustering of sacrificer, victim, and threatening fire. To drive the point home the threat comes from the sacrificer’s own fire that he has just now churned out of his fire drill. Sacrifice, then, dramatizes the tangled relationships to excess in order to disentangle them and separate the identities. This also comes out when the sacrificer takes hold of the victim to lead it to its immolation. Laying hands on the animal, the sacrificer becomes one with the animal, and so his vital breath is in danger of departing with the animal’s when it is put to death.<sup>120</sup> Therefore, one should not lay hands on the animal but goad it with a forked stick (later to be used to roast the omentum, a fold of peritoneum connecting abdominal structures). In this way, again, “the animal is neither taken hold of, nor not taken hold of.” Similarly, on the eve of the soma sacrifice, the sacrificer must be formally separated from the stalks of the soma plant with which he has previously identified himself and that now are deposited in a special shed. At the same time the fire must be drilled and set apart from the sacrificer.<sup>121</sup>

Elsewhere the ritual separation of man and his cattle is given effect in a different but equally clear manner. Under the brick-built fire altar five heads are to be buried, a human head in the middle surrounded by those of a horse, a bull, a ram, and a goat. These heads, including the human head, can only come originally from sacrificial victims, or they would be unfit for the purpose.<sup>122</sup> Here the unity of man (as a *paśu*) with cattle has become maximal, and thus the greater is the need to extricate their identities. “These are the victims (*paśu*); separately he puts them down, separately he settles them, separately he pronounces the *sūdadohas* [“milk-yielding”] formula on them; for separate from each other are those animal victims; he then makes a libation on the human head, and he thus makes man among animals fit to be a sacrificer; therefore among animals only man performs sacrifice.”<sup>123</sup> The awareness of the coextensiveness of man and his cattle is raised to an unbearable level, and at the same time the tangle is dissolved by literally setting the identities apart.

## 1.9

The instances just quoted illustrate tellingly the tensions underlying the domesticator’s sacrifice. They show how the tensions are intensified and focused so as to turn them into sharply outlined verbal and ritualistic ambiguities of taking hold of (i.e., immolating) the victim and at the same time



not doing so, of killing and at the same time not killing, of identifying sacrificer and victim and at the same time separating them. It is obvious that these instances resulted from a detailed and unsparing reflection on sacrifice. They are, in other words, intellectual constructions. As such their importance can hardly be overrated, and we will have to return to them when discussing Vedic ritualism. At this point it may be asked whether there were other more direct or “organic” ways in which the tensions brought out in sacrifice were handled, independent of and anterior to fully elaborated ritualism.

It would seem that such ways for handling tension were indeed available and, in fact, built in. The obvious point where tension is concentrated is the immolation. We should, however, be careful not to overemphasize this point. As already argued, the killing per se appears to be less decisive than the sensitivities of modern scholars allow them to accept. As Royden K. Yerkes put it, “The death of the animal, while a necessary fact preliminary to the sacrifice as it is necessary to the preparation of a roast of meat for dinner, was not a factor of the sacrifice any more than it is a factor of the dinner.”<sup>124</sup> Rather, the point appears to be, as argued above, that in the *dromenon* of sacrifice man pretends to turn the tables on the natural order by claiming to “make” the animal and turn it into the support of life. Not the killing in itself but the paradoxical pretension of destroying life in order to gain life, of killing cattle in order to win more cattle, is what gives sacrificial immolation its special quality. This special quality is, as we saw, even more intense because of the intimate relationship between sacrificer and victim, which makes the notion of self-sacrifice all but unavoidable.

But it cannot be gainsayed that the immolation does provide a focus for tension. Vedic ritual especially evinces an obsessive concern with the killing. Not only is the victim’s death denied—“you do not die, nor do you come to harm, to the gods you go along paths good to go,”<sup>125</sup> ideas that are found in other religions too—but Vedic ritual thought is permeated with the urge to undo all possible injury. We are told repeatedly that this or that act or mantra is meant *ahimsāyai*, to counteract or obviate injury to life. This conspicuous insistence led Hanns-Peter Schmidt, not without justification, to postulate a “ritual theory of *ahimsā*,” noninjury to life, which he views as the root of the well-known later doctrine of nonviolence.<sup>126</sup> We shall have occasion to come back to this. Now it should at least caution us against underrating, as Yerkes in his otherwise sound comment seems to do, the impact of the sacrificial killing.

The essential point of sacrificial killing is that it has a tangible purpose, the festive meal, which provides the “organic,” self-evident occasion for working out the tangled relationships intensified in sacrifice and primarily clustered around the immolation. Although the classical *śrauta* or “solemn” ritual has removed the festive meal from the place and time of the sacrifice

and has it take place after the conclusion of the ritual, the texts contain many scattered but telling clues that allow us to reconstruct an approximate picture.

The main point is the divide between two parties, the party of the host and that of the guests. Given the intensely personal nature of the relationship between man and his cattle, it stands to reason—although students of sacrifice have paid little attention to this point—that to be organized a sacrifice needs a patron, a man of substance sufficiently wealthy to provide the goods to be spent in sacrifice, and especially a victim or victims. Such a patron will, of course, be assisted by his household and clients, and, generally, the preparations for the sacrifice and the performance will set off a flurry of activity throughout the local community and its affiliates. But it is another thing for a community as such to organize a sacrifice. Although perfectly possible, this would require a particular type of communal organization. At any rate the ancient Indian sources do not tell of any such organization taking care of sacrifice. When we hear of particular groups or sodalities concerned with sacrifice—*sattrins*, *vrātyas*—they appear to be of a temporary nature and to disband after the sacrifice. But mostly it is the single patron who presides over the sacrifice, puts up his property, and expects to reap the benefits of his “work,” his *karma*. Even the so-called village sacrifices and festivals of today are very much the affair of the headmanship although they involve the whole community, in much the same way as the classical Indian king is the organizer and chief celebrant in ceremonial events concerning the realm’s population.

Thus, it is the munificent patron and sacrificer who invites the guests. As Paul Thieme has already emphasized, Vedic sacrifice shows in all its details the pattern of a *Gastempfang*, the reception of the guests for a prestigious banquet, even though the banquet itself has been banned from the *śrauta* ritual.<sup>127</sup> In the classical form of the *śrauta* sacrifice there are no guests as such but only “priests” (*ṛtvij*), brahmin specialists who fill the various highly specialized functions—the *adhvaryu* looking after the ritual acts, the *hotṛ* concerned with the recitations, the *udgātṛ* performing the chants, and the *brahman*, the largely silent and inactive supervisor, each with his acolytes. But these priestly experts are clearly marked also as the patron’s guests. They are formally invited, received with the ceremonial mixture of sour milk, honey, and butter, regaled, and given gifts (*dakṣiṇā*).<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, they are at the same time formally viewed as representatives or rather human “doubles” of various gods. At their installation in their respective function the sacrificer says in a low voice “the god Āditya is the divine *adhvaryu*, may he be my *adhvaryu*,” then loudly, “So-and-so be my human *adhvaryu*,” and so forth, according to the particular function.<sup>129</sup>

It is especially with the *brahman*, who is more of a critical observer than an active officiant, that the original guest role comes out. This is underlined

when it is said that originally he received half of the *dakṣiṇās*.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, there are still the undefined *sadasyas*, those who sit (as onlookers) in the *sadas* hall of the soma sacrifice, where they participate in the soma drinking.<sup>131</sup> They clearly are considered to be guests. For the *brahman*'s role as a guest it is significant that the *sadasya* is mentioned as an acolyte of the *brahman*. Without a doubt, then, the priests are not only the necessary experts, they are equally the erstwhile guests and still keep this role in their function as experts of the fully elaborated ritual system that has marginalized the guests.

Now, the divide between hosts and guests is of the greatest importance in working out the fundamental tensions that are enacted and intensified in sacrifice. These tensions are, in the last resort, concerned with the enigmatic relationship of life and death. Sacrifice, as we have seen, is meant not to solve but to manipulate the enigma, and it is the host-guest relationship that makes it possible to do so. Put briefly, the host burdens his guests with the part of death in the life-death polarity. In concrete terms, the guests have to shoulder the burden of the victim's death—a burden that is the more onerous for the victim being intimately connected with its owner. In sacrifice, the sacrificer puts himself at stake and, as we shall see, this is more serious than a simple metaphor asking for metaphorical substitution. The ritual texts can only present sacrifice as an incontrovertible success story—provided always that no mistakes are made in executing it in strict accordance with its exacting rules. But even so they cannot make us overlook the possibility that the sacrificer may lose out and indeed lose his life, if only because of some mistake unwittingly committed in the proper execution of the ritual.<sup>132</sup>

So the sacrificer transfers the burden of his own death to his guests. Thus, it is stated that he who accepts food or a *dakṣiṇā* at a *sattra*—that is, a soma sacrifice lasting at least twelve days—“eats a corpse, a human corpse or the corpse of a horse.” And this is further elaborated in detail: “He who eats from his [the sacrificer's] victim, eats his flesh; who eats the vegetal cake, eats his brain; who eats his roasted grain, eats his excrement; who eats his ghee, eats his marrow; who partakes of his soma beverage, eats his sweat; and he eats the droppings of his head who accepts [a *dakṣiṇā*] at the twelve-day sacrifice; therefore one should not officiate at a *sattra*.”<sup>133</sup> On the face of it this refers exclusively to the special case of the *sattra*, which in the classical ritual system is celebrated by a group of brahmins who are all simultaneously both sacrificer and priest so that technically speaking there is no occasion for *dakṣiṇā* giving. However, we find a similar statement regarding the animal sacrifice on the eve of the standard one-day soma sacrifice.<sup>134</sup> And it is also generally understood that the sacrificer ransoms himself in his sacrifice and therefore needs to free himself through his offerings and gifts.<sup>135</sup> As we have already seen, the notion of self-sacrifice is awe-

somely near. The food and the *dakṣiṇā* are the sacrificer's dead self, which he disposes of by burdening his guests with it.

From what we have seen it should, however, be clear that the host-guest opposition, necessary as it is, cannot solve the existential conundrum of life and death. It allows one to enact the conundrum in the artificial counterworld of sacrifice, but it cannot take away its sinister threat. The host and sacrificer endeavors to unload the burden of death onto his guests by having them eat his food. It is hardly surprising that the texts often record feelings of more than moral indigestion experienced by the recipients, who are said to be "pressed down" or even "poisoned" by the sacrificer's food and gifts.<sup>136</sup> We cannot expect, therefore, that the invitees will readily submit to the deal. They will, on the contrary, try to get out of it by bending the rules of the game so as to outwit the sacrificer. Already at the beginning questions are ceremonially asked by the brahmin, when invited, regarding the type of sacrifice, the other officiants, and, of course, the *dakṣiṇās*.<sup>137</sup> These questions suggest intricate preliminary negotiations that open the possibility of honorably excusing oneself or, conversely, raising the conditions. Rather than just an invitation that one can take or leave, it appears to be a battle of wits. For the primary rule is that the invitation to participate in a sacrifice cannot simply be refused. How could sacrifice be successful in dealing with the life-and-death conundrum if there were no guests?

There is, then, an open rivalry between the host party and its guests. This is well illustrated by the ritualistic myth that is intended to explain the soma sacrifice that is completed in one day, from the bringing in of the soma to the concluding rites (*sādyaskra*).<sup>138</sup> "The Ādityas and the Aṅgirasas competed with each other for the world of heaven: 'we shall go first,' 'we [shall go first].' Now the Aṅgirasas 'saw,' as the first, the soma pressing [leading] to heaven that takes place on the next day (*śvalṣutyā*). They sent Agni, who was one of the Aṅgirasas: 'go and announce to the Ādityas the Soma sacrifice for tomorrow.' But on seeing Agni the Ādityas 'saw' the soma sacrifice that is begun and completed in one day." Since they had stolen a march on their rivals by devising a sacrifice that would precede the other one, the Ādityas were able to engage Agni as their own *hotṛ* officiant and herald to transmit their counterannouncement to the Aṅgirasas. Although dismayed by Agni's letting them down, the Aṅgirasas could not but accept officiating for their rivals. In fact, Agni could hardly have acted otherwise: since his previous commitment was only for the next day he could not honorably have excused himself. For, as it is explained, "he who comes with [the offer of] sacrificial office (*ārtvijya*) comes with [the offer of] honor (*yaśas*)."<sup>139</sup> Refusal would mean loss of honor. So Agni and the Aṅgirasas had no option but to accept. But it is no cause for surprise that the story continues with renewed difficulties over the grave matter of accepting

the *dakṣiṇās*. The Ādityas who, having tricked the Aṅgirasas, go to heaven present these adversaries with “this earth full of *dakṣiṇās*.”<sup>140</sup> But this lavish gift “burns” the Aṅgirasas, who therefore reject it. Still more difficulties ensue, for the rejected and therefore masterless *dakṣiṇā* turns into a fierce beast that threatens both parties and must be soothed by their rival invocations (*vihava*).<sup>141</sup> Finally the parties settle on the solar horse as the *dakṣiṇā*.<sup>142</sup> Only then can the sacrifice be successfully completed, both parties having salvaged their honor.

What this tale of rivalry also brings out is the insuperable ambiguity of sacrifice already noted. The sacrificer offers himself in his property, but by the same token his guests find themselves in a severe predicament. For, in accepting his food and gifts, they accept his dead self. The goods of life are at the same time the goods of death.<sup>143</sup> This is even clearer in the domestic ritual of the guest reception. The important guest is honored by being offered a cow, an honor he—like the Aṅgirasas—cannot refuse. But it is he who then must give the order to “make” (*kuruta*) the victim, thereby taking on himself the responsibility for its immolation.<sup>144</sup> On the other hand, the sacrificer may—like the Ādityas—win the world of heaven, but his victory is achieved at the price of depleting himself of his goods. It would be dishonorable and even dangerous to refuse them, but their acceptance, although obviously much needed for the support of the recipient’s own life, is equally fraught with grave risks. Understandably it is also an insult to one’s honor not to be invited, for this would mean that one is considered unworthy to meet the challenge. And so we meet with many tales of vengefully forcing one’s way into the sacrificial grounds, so as to tangle with the sacrificer.<sup>145</sup>

The only way out of the predicament that both parties face—life without subsistence against subsistence burdened with death—is the circular process of reciprocity. The sacrificer who has depleted himself must eagerly wait for the others to return the honor. “The sacrifice goes away at its conclusion and does not turn back”; therefore, as the text explains, one should know the *punarā lambha*, “the taking hold again.” In the fully elaborated ritualistic scheme of sacrifice this is but a simple mantra.<sup>146</sup> It is, however, clear that, in reality, outside the strictly bounded purview of pure ritualism, the sacrificer is dependent on the others to recuperate from his depletion.

The critical dimension is time. In the words of Walter Burkert, “Sacrifices form a continuous chain that must never be broken.”<sup>147</sup> We may add that it should not be broken, for otherwise the artfully devised circulation of the goods of life and of death would break down. An act of sacrifice cannot stand on its own. Each must be followed by a revanche, and no sacrifice can be decisive. Man’s manipulation of the contradictory but insoluble link of life and death requires an endless concatenation of sacrifices to

play around the problem of death. But how can the sacrificer know, even when he has successfully distributed his bounty and won life by shedding his dead self, that the other party will honor its obligation over time and allow him to recuperate? Or, as the texts have it, how can he make sure that “sacrifice will turn to him again”? In actuality, he cannot. He even bars himself from devising any means of securing certainty, because his willful abandonment of the oblation proclaims his disinterestedness. Each sacrifice ends in an ambiguous draw: life without goods as against goods burdened with death. It cannot do without timely reciprocity. But this situation is fraught with uncertainty and instability.

### 1.10

On the pragmatic level sacrifice means, the redistribution of the material goods that one needs to maintain life. Life, property, and honor imperceptibly shade off into each other so as to form the inextricable cluster that constitutes the person. In the world of domestication this clustering has, as we saw, a maximal intensity. This does not mean, however, that the person is strictly bounded. One depends on others for obtaining and exploiting the sources of life. On his own, no one can survive, let alone perpetuate himself through procreation. People are, as it were, permeated by the exchanges with the others on whom they depend for survival.

This comes out even more clearly when we realize that the ancient Vedic world was a world of scarcity, of *ambhas*, the narrow straits confining life and causing severe anxiety. It is at the time of redistribution, that is, the time of sacrifice, that the tensions involved in the intricate network of persons, their property, and their honor—in short, the substance of life—are brought to a head. The sacrificer, therefore, cannot stand on his own. He must involve himself totally with the others, his guests, who need him for the substance of their life just as he needs them. “A man gives himself and he does so because he owes himself—himself and his possessions—to others,” as Marcel Mauss put it.<sup>148</sup> But this cannot be a matter of submersion of the person in the pool of his relationships. As with domesticated property, sacrifice, while maximizing mutual involvement, at the same time extricates and separates the identities. The quality of these identities, however, is changed by the sacrificial redistribution. On the next occasion of sacrifice the depleted sacrificer will have to act as a guest in the ambiguous game. The proud king may be forced into exile—the often-mentioned *aparuddho rājā*—in hopes of recuperating and making his comeback at the next turn of the endless rounds of *qui perd, gagne*.<sup>149</sup> Sacrifice in principle—as well as in pragmatic terms—is not a stable order but one of instability and reversal, which ensures the circulation of goods. The “material sacrifice”

(*dravyamayo yajñah*), the goods won, must be staked again in renewed sacrifice, this being the “everlasting path of fortune” (*śāśvato ’yam bhūtipathah*).<sup>150</sup>

Although as “play” it is at one remove from society—a distance that makes it possible to heighten and act out its tensions—sacrifice cannot be shut away in a separate corner. It is intensely concerned with social reality, and above all with conflict. In fact it has conflict built in. This is already apparent in the reapportioning of inequalities. At the outset there is the imbalance between the munificent sacrificer and his guests, the recipients of his bounty, and this imbalance is only reversed, not turned into an equal distribution. Similarly there are also conventional inequalities in the distribution of the *dakṣiṇā* gifts as regards both quality and quantity.<sup>151</sup>

But apart from these pragmatic points regarding the unequal redistribution, we have already seen that sacrifice is not just concerned with conflict. It *is* conflict writ large. The Ādityas and the Aṅgirasas fought their battle through sacrifice. At first sight one might be inclined to consider this a special case that applies only to the somewhat unusual *sādyaskra* soma sacrifice, which accordingly is recommended for a sacrificer who wants to best his opponent. By implication this opponent must be a rival sacrificer, and the fight is then to be decided by sacrifice. The place of the competing soma sacrificers has, it seems, even been preserved in the classical ritual enclosure where they sit as officiants, each behind his fire hearth (*dhīṣṇya*).<sup>152</sup> One could still maintain that, notwithstanding the obvious tension between the host and guest parties, sacrifice is normally a peaceful affair. But, apart from the tale of the Ādityas and Aṅgirasas, the ritual itself is replete with references to conflict, not only with unnamed enemies (*dviṣat*, *bhrātr̥ya*) but between the sacrificer and his officiants. Thus, for instance, the *adhvaryu* officiant is given precise instructions about how to deprive his patron of his cattle. To milk the cows for the *sāmnāyā* mixture of sweet and sour milk the calves are driven away with a branch of the *parṇa* tree that should be in full leaf. But “if he should wish him [the sacrificer] to be without cattle, he should get for him a dry-tipped branch without leaves and twigs.”<sup>153</sup> This is not a ritualistic warning against the use of the wrong kind of stick but straightforward advice for the officiant who wants to harm the sacrificer. And this is far from being an isolated case. We cannot escape the conclusion that there must have been a hostile tension between the two parties so fundamental that even the fully developed ritualism could not easily do away with it; it could only break it up into a welter of ritualistic detail.

Against this background it becomes understandable that even the harmless and peaceful fortnightly new and full moon vegetal sacrifices are characterized in the older brāhmaṇa texts as rivaling sacrifices (*samr̥ta-yajña*). “To whose sacrifice do the gods come, to whose not?”<sup>154</sup> This sup-

poses that there are more sacrificers than one and that they compete to come out on top as the one victorious sacrificer “to whose sacrifice the gods come.” The situation does not seem to be different from that of the competing Ādityas and Aṅgirasas. Those who lose must then submit to the winner and acknowledge his superiority as their patron.

But how, by what signs, do the gods make their presence known to one or the other party? The texts do not tell us. Yet it is easy to see how the gods decide to whose sacrifice they will go. It simply is the outcome of the contest between the parties. The gods are sure to back the winner. Conversely, his victory is the one and only proof of the gods’ presence on his side. In fact this is what is spelled out by a not overly esoteric passage: “Where the cows are, there are the gods; where the gods are, there is Indra [the warrior god]; those win to whose side the cows come together.”<sup>155</sup> The decision, then, is not so much a matter of the presence or absence of the gods but rather the capacity to collect more cattle than the others. How this can be done our passage also tells us. One Krīta Vaitahotra had learned the names of the divine cows. “With them he called the cows of the Kurus over to him”; in other words, Krīta rustled the Kurus’ cattle. The latter naturally go after the cattle rustler, and the two parties engage each other in a contest.<sup>156</sup> The main feature of the engagement, however, is that the two parties compete in calling the cows each to his own side. The Kurus win and so the gods are at their side, for that is where the cows went. As we have seen, the winning party will immolate one of the cows won from the other party.<sup>157</sup>

Although we may safely assume that the fight will have been appropriately violent—the scene cannot have been much different from those of later times, celebrated by “hero stones” commemorating the warriors fallen in defense of the village’s cattle—the interesting point is the *vihava*, the rival invocation in which the parties try to get the gods to their side. But we already know where the gods will go: get the cows, the gods will follow. Our passage also reminds us of the rivalry over the *dakṣiṇā* between the Ādityas and Aṅgirasas. There too the way to deal with the enraged—because masterless—cow that had reverted to the wild state was the *vihava*.<sup>158</sup>

## 1.11

What these rather unedifying tales tell us is that sacrifice, at least Vedic sacrifice, is from beginning to end a contest. It starts with the competition to be the actual sacrificer. But once this point of honor—which accordingly engages the sacrificer’s whole substance—has been settled, he may be tripped up at every step, as is still visible in the rules for the officiating priest who wants to harm his sacrificer—deprive him of his cattle, for instance. We also find, embedded in the more elaborate soma feasts such as the *ma-*



*hāvvrata*, a New Year festival, or the royal rituals of *rājasūya*, *vājapeya*, and *āsvamedha*, regular contests, albeit neatly packaged in the rules of the *śrauta* ritual. Thus we have a ritualized chariot race in the *vājapeya* and the *rājasūya*; the latter, as well as the ritual for establishing one's sacrificial fires (*agnyādheya*), features a full-scale dicing game for the parts of a cow; and most importantly there are the verbal contests, especially the *brahmodyas* or disputations in which the participants challenge each other with riddle questions that hold the cosmic *brahman* secret and that provided the model for the great Upaniṣadic debates.<sup>159</sup> At the other end of the sacrifice, after the oblation, at the distribution of the *dakṣiṇās* and the festive meal, there still is, as we have seen, the antithetical or even agonistic matter of acceptance.

Although they are sportive games these contests are no less consequential and bloody. Even the verbal games of the *brahmodya*, as the Upaniṣads show, are far from harmless. The loser who does not acknowledge his defeat in time may pay for it with his head.<sup>160</sup> It does not seem that originally this was simple hyperbole. The loser may well have been the victim providing "the head of the sacrifice," a frequent expression for elements of the ritual considered important, which harks back to the original immolatory practice of cutting off the head.<sup>161</sup>

Like the whole of sacrifice they are "play," "games" in the sense Huizinga gave these terms. Therefore they fit in perfectly with sacrifice, which is the highest, most weighty manifestation of the phenomenon of play, because life and death are directly at stake in it. Being a game, it is characterized by tension and uncertainty, and, given the maximal stakes, tension and uncertainty reach a maximal and all but unbearable pitch. The parties in it cannot merely be antithetical. Sacrifice has to be agonistic: throughout the ancient Indian *śrauta* ritual the contest has left its mark. The disturbing and destabilizing effect of sacrifice makes itself manifest in its fiercely agonistic character.

We have now come to the point at which we should add a fourth element to the three major elements we have been analyzing. On top of killing, destruction, and banquet we have come to recognize the element of contest permeating the whole of the proceedings. We should have known this already, when we saw that *kāma*, desire, is viewed as the motive force of both cosmogony and sacrifice.

This does not mean that there cannot be types of sacrifice that are of a private or solitary nature and so have no use for the agonistic element. But such solitary sacrifices are not known from the *śrauta* texts. It is true that the Vedic ritualists reworked sacrifice into a strictly private affair of the sacrificer, removing the common meal from the spatial and temporal confines of the sacrificial ritual while demoting sacrificial rivalry (*samṛtayañña*, *sam-sava*) to the status of a ritual mistake. But even so the *śrauta* sacrifice still

bears the clearly visible imprint of a prestigious public affair, “a stylized banquet,” as Paul Thieme put it. Nor is the domestic (*grhya*) sacrifice more private. We shall have occasion to come back to the division in *grhya* and *śrauta*, but the divide is not the one between private and public. Sacrifice, then, and especially animal sacrifice, is very much a public, social affair, as one would expect it to be. Cattle keeping and cultivation, given their ultimate purpose of providing for food and survival, cannot be solitary affairs. Neither can sacrifice normally be a solitary concern. But this equally means that sacrifice as a social event implies rivalry almost by definition. We have seen how this naturally given rivalry is exploited in the game of sacrifice in order to play out the conundrum of life and death. The contest is therefore essential to sacrifice, the highest because most dangerous, as well as the most consequential, form of “play.” Therefore too it cannot be entered into or left at will. One is compelled to go on playing the game of the sacrificial contest.

The place of sacrifice, then, must be viewed as the battleground on which the parties engage in the contest for life and death. It does not seem to be a fortuitous metaphor when the Mahābhārata calls Kuruksetra, the field of the Kurus, the gods’ place of sacrifice (*devānām devayajanam*), where the epic heroes confront death in the “sacrifice of battle” (*raṇayajña*) in hopes of winning new life.<sup>162</sup> For the warrior the idea of self-sacrifice, which as we saw is implied in sacrifice, becomes reality. The nightmarish imagination of the Mahābhārata—in the words of Marcel Mauss “the story of a gigantic potlatch”<sup>163</sup>—that has both parties exterminate each other shows us to what extent the thought of death and devastation was associated with the sacrificial contest. In fact, epic exaggeration points up the ultimate consequence of sacrifice. No wonder the dharma texts consider sacrifice to be too much for our morally decayed age, the fourth or *kaliyuga*. The institution of sacrifice broke down in the sacrificial battle of the epic and thereby ushered in our own decrepit era. The dharma cow, having only one leg left to stand on, has been definitively destabilized. The sacrificial life-and-death contest cannot be sustained any longer, and the only virtue left is in the gift, no longer in sacrifice.

## 1.12

Before we discount the “battle of sacrifice” as an epic invention, we should remember that sacrifice as a social event is normally competitive. We should not be surprised then that sacrifice becomes the warrior’s affair. In the agonistic game of sacrifice the warrior’s honor, prowess, and spirit of self-sacrifice, as well as his wit and astuteness, find their highest calling. Here too rich material prizes are to be won or lost. Above all it is here that the fundamental issue of life and death is acted out and the “goods of life” are

reapportioned, which in its turn will call for further rounds of sacrifice. For such is the compulsion of the “eternal path of fortune.”

Sacrifice calls forth the warrior, who cannot but turn it into a battle. The outcome, however, can never be definitive. The battle must always be renewed, for the enigmatic tangle of life and death remains forever unresolvable. That is why the mythic battle of the gods and their counterparts, the asuras—the pervasive theme of the Vedic ritual texts—never ends. The equation of sacrifice and battle is not just an imaginative metaphor but awesome reality.

Sacrifice is not a safe outlet for pent-up aggression and competition that is redirected at a scapegoat victim. If that were the case, the immolatory killing would bring relief and the ensuing meal would establish harmony. We have, however, seen that such an outcome, though eagerly hoped for, is far from certain. As the Vedic material shows, the proceedings, from the initial invitation to the distribution of food and gifts, is imbued with conflict. By offering an arena apart from normal life sacrifice calls forth and intensifies competition and conflict. It must do so in order to disentangle and play out the riddle of life and death in ever-recurring rounds of an ambiguous *qui perd, gagne*. And it can do so, because it is a game subject to its own rules, at one remove from everyday life.

The densely tangled relationships of men, cattle, and fire brought about by domestication broadens and deepens the life-and-death riddle. The greater is the need for sacrifice if man is not to be dissolved in these relationships. But also the more intense is the conflict played out in sacrifice. Domestication, it would seem, makes sacrifice the battleground of the warrior. The warrior's ethos exacerbates to the breaking point the tensions and stresses that are at the heart of sacrifice. Yet it is this unbearable intensity that highlights the pivotal role of sacrifice as the dynamic center of the universe, as it is in the cosmogonic dismemberment of the cosmic male. But this equally means that the center of the universe is unstable and insecure. It provides for dynamic reversals and revolutions, but it can only do so at the price of jeopardizing stability and predictable order.

The world of sacrifice is a broken world. It is broken at its very center and forever balances on the brink of collapse. Its definitive collapse, however, was not brought about by the warrior's relentless fury. It was the work of the ancient Vedic ritualists. We shall now turn to their achievement as well as their failure in handling the violent game of sacrifice.

# *Ritual*

## 2.1

IT WAS RITUAL that brought about the definitive collapse of the world of sacrifice. This proposition may seem overly provocative and bound to create misunderstanding. After all, sacrifice is a privileged occasion for elaborate and highly profiled ritual, and it seems all but impossible to distinguish between sacrifice and its ritual. Who says *sacrifice*, says *ritual*. It is in the first and in the last place the ritual of any event that makes it possible to discern whether that event is a sacrifice and not, say, a simple killing or butchery. Even though the concept of sacrifice presupposes a religious motivation that sets it apart from other killings, it is in fact the ritual involved that can tell us about the religious nature of the event. Such other killings are not unusually also marked by a highly profiled ritual. Thus, for instance, a judicial execution—even though it has undoubtedly much in common with sacrifice—has its own distinctive ritual.<sup>1</sup> So it is ritual that defines sacrifice. And it was in this way that Adolf Jensen could draw a dividing line between sacrifice and what he called “ritual killing.”<sup>2</sup> The decisive point in his opinion is that the former involves a gift to the godhead while the latter does not. So, also for the distinction that Jensen wants to make, the decisive point is not the religious motivation that is equally present in both cases but an element of ritual, namely, the presence or absence of the gift. Whether we accept the gift as an essential element or not—in the preceding chapter I have argued that it is not—sacrifice and ritual seem to be inextricably linked. And, anyway, in the absence of sacrificial ritual we would be hard put to recognize sacrifice.

However, we should be careful in identifying sacrifice with its ritual. There is at least one well-documented case of a sacrifice *without* sacrificial ritual—the Crucifixion. In actual fact it was not a sacrifice but a judicial execution and an ignominious one at that. Yet, for all we know, it came almost immediately to be recognized as a sacrifice. It was even seen as the ultimate sacrifice, instituting an entirely new, eschatological order. As the covenant of the Old Testament was sealed by sacrifice,<sup>3</sup> so the new covenant

also had to be instituted by the shedding of blood—"the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."<sup>4</sup> But the order of the new covenant was no longer marked by the cult of sacrifice that was indeed absent from the primitive Christian-Jewish community. The sacrificial blood founding the new order was shed at the ultimate sacrifice that ended all sacrifice. As such Christ's sacrifice was unique and not meant to be redone. It was, therefore, not in need of any ritual. It is thus even more remarkable that, however slowly and tortuously, a ritual came to be elaborated. In fact, its outline and purport were, in a way, preordained. It was instituted at the Lord's Supper, which gave an entirely new turn to the communal meal or *chabūrah*.<sup>5</sup> The innovation is in the striking words recorded in the Gospels by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, "This is my body" and "This is my blood of the new testament." We cannot know whether Jesus meant these words to refer to his impending death as his self-sacrifice, but the terminology is clearly sacrificial. Whatever the original intention of these words, they made the *chabūrah* approximate a sacrificial meal. As Gregory Dix has argued, the inference that "what is done with 'this bread' and 'this cup' is what He forthwith did with His Body and Blood—offered them in sacrifice—was irresistible."<sup>6</sup>

But even though the bread and the cup could provide the basis for the sacrificial understanding of both the rite of the Eucharist and of Jesus' death on the cross, there still was and remained a wide gap between the ritual on the one hand and the actual death on the other. The gap kept troubling Christian dogmatic and liturgical thought throughout its history. The sacrificial understanding of the Crucifixion will have been well-nigh unavoidable to overcome the ignominy of the judicial execution. It will, moreover, have been reinforced by the analogy of the old covenant's sacrificial seal, which required a similar sealing of the new covenant. But even so one wonders why a sacrifice not meant to be repeated should require a ritual, repetition being at the heart of ritual. It is significant that once the ritual was being elaborated, it did entail the repetition of the original and unique sacrifice in the rite of the Eucharist, which Cyril of Jerusalem called the "holy and most dreadful sacrifice" and that with Theodore of Mopsuestia even comes to look like a new immolation predicated of the body of Christ instead of an act of remembrance—"do this in remembrance of me."<sup>7</sup> Although this radical thrust to close the gap between the eucharistic ritual and the actual death on the cross appears to be a special feature of the eastern liturgy, the western church equally had to pay tribute to the constraint of ritual that implies repetition and is not easily satisfied with the symbolic or metaphorical but needs to be somehow realistic. The Reformation, though rejecting the dogma of the transubstantiation, could not radically withdraw from the sacrificial understanding of the Lord's Supper. It could only draw attention to the gap that separates the Crucifixion as a once-and-for-all re-

deeming sacrifice from its “continual remembrance,” as the Anglican catechism has it, in the Lord’s Supper that consequently lost its pivotal place in the liturgy.

The case of the Christian liturgy not only shows that the linkage of sacrifice and ritual is not a natural given; it also illustrates the necessity to create such a link. The need for a sacrificial ritual is the more intense, if the killing must still be legitimized as a proper sacrifice. But the main function of sacrificial ritual is perhaps not to legitimize the killing but to set the mold for its cyclical repetition as realistically as can be. As we saw, the urge of redoing the killing understood as sacrifice is all but irresistible. We should bear in mind that sacrifice is emphatically a “matter of life and death” and that it is no less so when its main purpose is considered to be the release of food, the sustenance of life, for consumption. It enacts the refractory riddle of life and death but cannot solve it. And it is this very insolubility that powerfully requires the reenactment of the riddle. It is then no longer surprising that the Crucifixion, once it was understood as sacrifice, had somehow to be reenacted and therefore could not do without a ritual mold. This is so notwithstanding the incontrovertible understanding of the Crucifixion as a unique historical event—“sub Pontio Pilato”—and therefore unrepeatable. Paradoxically, it is this utter intensity of the understanding of a unique event as a sacrifice-to-end-all-sacrifice that made its ritual reenactment even more compulsive.

How Christian dogma and liturgy wrestled to square the circle of an unrepeatable event that yet had to be repeated is no less than fascinating. But we must leave this theme to those qualified to deal with it and rest content with what it can tell us about the complicated relationship of sacrifice and ritual. The case of the Christian liturgy shows that sacrifice and ritual, however necessary their intimate connection must be, are in fact worlds apart: the sacrificial understanding of the passion could and did come about fairly naturally—as is shown by the speed with which it was accepted. It can even be seen to have been unavoidable. But then it was a sacrifice without the requisite ritual. That the Last Supper was invoked to fill out the vacant function of ritual would seem to be equally understandable. Still it did require the strikingly innovative statement about the bread and the wine to turn the *chabūrah* into a fully sacrificial meal. But the consequence was not only that the sacrifice and the sacrificial meal were separated—this also happened in Vedic ritual—but also that the normal order was reversed: the meal not following but preceding the actual sacrifice.<sup>8</sup>

Incidentally, the separation of the meal, the life-sustaining benefit of sacrifice, from the actual sacrifice will have facilitated the function of the Lord’s Supper as the ritual for a sacrifice that did not bear reenactment. For the same reason we can understand that the Passover, though it would quite naturally have provided the model for the ritual, could not very well do so

and, it would seem, was consciously kept from doing so. The Passover could be and was metaphorically used to refer to the passion of Christ, as Paul uses it in the first Epistle to the Corinthians,<sup>9</sup> but not to the eucharistic ritual. In fact, the otherwise obvious equation of the communion with the Passover meal was late in becoming evident.<sup>10</sup>

Even though the juncture of the sacrificial interpretation of the catastrophic event and the eucharistic ritual was marvellously achieved already at the beginning through the reinterpretation of the bread and the wine of the common meal, we still end up with a ritual without sacrifice and a sacrifice without ritual. What this illustrates, however, is not only the delicate and complicated relationship of sacrifice and ritual. It also demonstrates in the first place the conscious and careful effort of ritual construction. Ritual has to be thoughtfully designed and elaborated over time so as to fulfill its necessary but delicate function of legitimately reenacting a fundamental and insoluble problem—without blurring it and therefore presenting it as realistically as possible.

As we have already seen when discussing sacrifice, ritual is construed out of commonplace acts, gestures, and words, or it may use already-available rites or blocks of rites originally construed in the same manner, but it is the reflective construction that counts. In other words a ritual complex such as sacrifice has a history. It does not come to us unchanged out of the mist of time. The elements, the acts and gestures out of which it was construed may in part even antedate *Homo sapiens*—let alone the institution of sacrifice—when they had a perfectly self-evident and commonsensical function, such as killing for food and eating.<sup>11</sup> But taken out of their organic context they change in nature. They become isolated and substantialized elements in a history of ritual construction and refinement.<sup>12</sup>

Such is also the history of Vedic ritual in its confrontation with sacrifice. On the face of it there is hardly any common ground with the history of the Christian liturgy—valorization of a unique sacrifice on the one hand, breaking the self-perpetuating cycle of sacrifice on the other—but in both cases the development is set off by a catastrophic sacrifice that ritual is called on to counteract and lead into beneficial channels.

## 2.2

As we now return to Vedic sacrificial ritual we are struck by the glaring discrepancy between ritual mythology and the detailed ritual rules that the mythological tales are supposed to explain. While the rules deploy a comprehensive and exhaustive order regulating each move and each utterance with painful precision, the mythological explanations speak of an entirely different order. They continually refer to conflict, contest, and battle. The devas and their adversaries, the asuras, are forever fighting each other. The

perfectly regulated soma ritual, with its intricate web of offerings, recitations, and chants interwoven with the pressing, preparing of libations, and drinking of the soma beverage, is equated with the awesome confusion of the killing of the demon Vṛtra, the “Obstruction,” who holds the universe in his grip, by the warrior god Indra. Even though the words of mantras and recitations tend to be revealingly but unspecifically warlike, there is nothing in the orderly proceedings that suggests anything so disturbing as a fight with the cosmic dragon. If the texts did not insist on the equation we would never have known of the contest. Although this is at first sight puzzling, it is important to note that the ritualists do equate sacrifice and battle.

We noticed already that the perfectly innocuous fortnightly vegetal offerings are considered to be a contest—a contest, that is, between competing sacrificers.<sup>13</sup> Here it would seem we come somewhat nearer than the imaginary dragon fight to realities on the ground. One might picture such competing sacrificers as each sitting on his own perfectly ordered place of sacrifice invoking the gods to come to his and not to the other’s sacrifice. And this appears indeed to be the ritualists’ understanding of a *samsava* or *samṛtayajña*, which with them is simply a spatial problem of two ritual enclosures situated too close to each other. The places of sacrifice should be separated by a day’s journey, a river, or a mountain.<sup>14</sup> Such spatial arrangements are certainly adequate to keep potential contenders apart, and the gods apparently have no problem in attending both sacrifices at the same time, even though they are at an appreciable distance from each other. The competitor or enemy is then conveniently dealt with in absentia. Of these enemies there must, however, be a surfeit, because the explanations of the ritual and its details are replete with references to them, acts and mantras being often said to harm, subdue, or eliminate the enemy. Although the *dviṣat* or *bhrātṛnya* is generally absent—there is no place for him on the perfectly regulated place of sacrifice—there is at least one case in which he should be handed a piece of silver as a gift, namely, when the fireplaces are readied in the ritual for setting up the sacrificial fires.<sup>15</sup> There is an obvious problem here: How does one manage to have the enemy present for his ritual duty at the right time and place? So there is the alternative of simply throwing the piece of silver outside the ritual enclosure. But the first alternative suggests that, even though the enemy has no place on the sacrificial grounds, he is at least quite near. Or rather the original situation must have been that he was not only present on the place of sacrifice but also that his presence there was essential.

That the enemy’s participation in the proceedings was indeed essential still shines through when the offering ladle (*juhū*) and the companion ladle (*upabhr̥t*) are associated with the sacrificer and his enemy, respectively, the one having the sacrificer and the other the enemy “for its deity” (*yajamāna-*



*devatya*, *bhrātr̥vyadevatya*).<sup>16</sup> Although both are filled with ghee and are held together—the *upabhr̥t* held with the left hand underneath the *juhū* while the oblation is made in the fire—offerings are only made with the *juhū*. The idea is, of course, that in this way the enemy is subdued by the sacrificer. But even so the second ladle—which is exactly like the *juhū* in form—has no other function than being held rather unnecessarily underneath the offering ladle and encumbering the act of making the oblation. Could its curious use not hark back to the presence of the *bhrātr̥vyā* on the place of sacrifice, making his own competing oblation with his own ladle? This would at least explain the otherwise unnecessarily cumbersome use of two similar ladles out of which only one, the sacrificer's own, is used for the oblation and is, thus, the decisive and valid one. And so we see that after the last oblation the *upabhr̥t* is removed from the grass bed on which the ladles and offerings are placed (*vedi*), to the west of it. The mantra accompanying this act leaves no doubt about the intention: "Indra and Agni—or whichever god the sacrifice is addressed to—have scattered my rivals." It is then sprinkled with water and put down again on the *vedi*, but separate from the *juhū*.<sup>17</sup> One might, of course, view the *upabhr̥t* as some sort of image of the enemy, enabling the sacrificer to subdue him in effigy. But we should then expect a more plausible effigy than a rather superfluous extra offering ladle. If the enemy is to be represented by this implement, it can hardly have been anything else than his own offering ladle left behind as a token of his erstwhile presence.

In the same way we can understand that the *puro'nuvākya*, the inviting verse preceding the offering verse (*yājya*) and the oblation, is equally associated with the enemy. In this case there is no question of subduing the enemy in effigy. "If [the officiant] desire of a sacrificer that the blessing (*āśis*) of the sacrifice go to his enemy, he should insert the 'utterances' (*vyāhrti*) [i.e., the syllables *bhūh*, *bhuvah*, *svah*] in the *puro'nuvākya*; the *puro'nuvākya* has the enemy for its deity, the blessing surely goes to the enemy."<sup>18</sup> The implication clearly is that the rival takes part in the same sacrifice, competing for its beneficial results. This appears also from the continuation of our text: "If he desire of the sacrificers [plural] that the blessing go equally to [all of] them, he should insert one 'utterance' in the middle of the *puro'nuvākya*, at the half verse, one before the offering verse (*yājya*) and one in its middle; in that way the blessing goes to [all of] them equally."

No less clearly the original presence of the enemy on the place of sacrifice as a participant is suggested by the fact that one of the three fires, the southern or cooking fire (*dakṣiṇāgni*, *anvāhāryapacana*), is also associated with the enemy, in contradistinction to the *gārhapatya*, where the vegetal oblations are prepared, and the offering fire, the *āhavanīya*, both of which have the sacrificer for their deity.<sup>19</sup> Generally there is a noticeable opposition between the *gārhapatya* and the *āhavanīya*, on the one hand, and the

*dakṣiṇāgni*, on the other. While the two former fires are derived from the sacrificer's fire drill, the *dakṣiṇāgni* is usually to be taken from another live fire.<sup>20</sup> Given the intensely personal relationship of the sacrificer with his fire we have already discussed<sup>21</sup> it would seem that the association of the southern fire with the enemy was originally more than a harmless piece of ritualistic imagination. In this connection we can hardly avoid being reminded of the seven *dhiṣṇya* hearths, including the *āgnīdhṛīya* hearth, arranged in a north-south line on the extended place of sacrifice for the soma ritual. The seven hearths are attached to the "seven *hotṛs*." Now, apart from its technical use for a specific officiant, the recitator of mantras and of longer recitations (esp. *śastras*) from the Ṛgveda, *hotṛ* simply means "sacrificer," as *hotrā* means "sacrifice."<sup>22</sup> We see then the seven *hotṛakas*, each with his own hearth on the same place of sacrifice. There is no direct indication of strife or competition, but we are told that in the beginning the *dhiṣṇyas* guarded the soma beverage in the yonder world. The gods, however, deprived them of it by means of the *gāyatrī* (meter). Although pursuing the gods who had made off with the soma, they could not win it back, but at least those who came nearest received a share.<sup>23</sup> That is the reason, we are told, that some of the *dhiṣṇya* fires receive offerings and others do not. The interesting point is that the *dhiṣṇyas* are deprived of the soma—reminding us of the *upabhr̥t* ladle's exclusion from use in offerings—as also that there is an opposition between the *dhiṣṇya* fires that receive and those that do not receive an offering. This suggests a contrast between those that submit or commend themselves to the successful sacrificer and so enter his service—"he who knows thus wins an attendant (*pariveṣṭṛ*)," as the Taittirīya Saṃhitā has it—as against those that do not and so are left out (*atihāya*).<sup>24</sup> At any rate the *dhiṣṇyas*, or rather the *hotṛakas* connected with them, appear to be involved in a contest for the soma and for sacrifice.

But the full extent of strife and contest comes into focus when we look at the north-south direction of the *dhiṣṇya* alignment as against the west-east line from the *gārhapatya* to the *āhavanīya*, the two fires directly associated with the sacrificer.<sup>25</sup> In further explanations of the *dhiṣṇyas* we are referred to the perennial fight between the *devas* and their counterparts, the *asuras*. The latter attacked the *devas*, overrunning their place of sacrifice from the south up to the *āgnīdhṛīya* hearth at the northern end. There, however, the gods managed to hold out against the *asuras* and finally drove them back again.<sup>26</sup> We can, therefore, readily understand that it is expressly forbidden to cross the line between the *gārhapatya* and the *āhavanīya*, which is the line leading straight to heaven and therefore must be securely controlled by the sacrificer.<sup>27</sup> This is not just a matter of imaginative symbolism; nor is the *asuras*' attack from the south a purely mythological invention. Originally the idea appears to have been based in reality, for we find a reparatory rite not only in the case of a harmless person inadvertently pass-

ing between the two fires but also a cart or chariot or somebody carrying his fires.<sup>28</sup> It is unlikely that such an event would be just a fortuitous mishap. It must be intentional. And so we should not be surprised that a special guardian is appointed against the obviously evil intention.<sup>29</sup> The inadvertent mishap turns out originally to have been an intentional clash or even a full-scale chariot fight between contending warrior-sacrificers carrying with them their own fires.

As we have already surmised,<sup>30</sup> the place of sacrifice was originally a battleground, where one fought for the “goods of life,” the cattle that, as we have seen, is closely associated with the fires marking the sacrificial emplacement as well as the cattlepen.<sup>31</sup> And so we should not be surprised to learn of sacrificers being attacked on their place of sacrifice and robbed of their possessions, as happened to one Sthūra, who lost his life in the fray.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, we are also told of another occasion, when the sacrificer was molested by warriors “clad in antelope hides” (*ajinavāsino yudhyamānāḥ*), that is, it would seem, by consecrated sacrificers, the antelope hide being the mark of the *dīkṣita*.<sup>33</sup> Even the gods are not above such proceedings, for elsewhere we learn that once, when the Maruts were engaged in sacrifice, Indra and Agni defeated and robbed them of their sacrificial wherewithal consisting of a thousand head of cattle (*sattrapariveśanam sahasram*).<sup>34</sup> After all, it was also at a sacrifice that the gods, according to later purāṇic mythology, tricked the asura king Bali out of his dominion over the three worlds with the help of Viṣṇu, who insinuated himself into the asuras’ sacrificial festival in the guise of a derisively harmless brahmin dwarf.

However disturbing the rival’s presence may be, his participation in the sacrifice not only as a guest but also and especially as a contender and opponent of the sacrifice’s patron was essential to the sacrificial contest. The ultimate ambivalence and uncertainty of life to be won out of death called for the participants’ intensely personal engagement and direct confrontation in the sacrificial arena. The idea that the ritualistic texts seem to suggest of the contenders sitting apart, each on his own well-ordered place of sacrifice and sedately finishing off the adversary by remote control, appears strangely inappropriate. It cannot be fortuitous that the sacrificial implements, such as the *juhū* and the *upabhr̥t*, are called the “weapons of sacrifice” (*yajñāyudhāni*). And even when the devas and asuras, unable to decide their fight by ordinary weapons such as clubs or bow and arrow, revert to the more sophisticated verbal contest, it is still in direct confrontation within the same arena.<sup>35</sup> Nor should we forget that the loser in the verbal contest who fails to acknowledge his defeat in time and commends himself to his victorious opponent may have to pay for his boldness with his head.<sup>36</sup> However much bound to convention, the order of the life-and-death game of sacrifice is the disorder of uncertainty, death, and devastation. It spells the overthrow of the existing order, even of its own conventional order. A

new order may be brought about, as when the gods “sacrificed sacrifice with sacrifice” and so set out the *prathamāni dharmāni*, the first ordinances, but the uncertainty remains and the outcome may as well be collapse and chaos.

The brāhmaṇa texts are clear enough about the catastrophic potential of sacrifice. In more general terms we have already discussed it in the first chapter. But the question before us is how the fury of sacrifice, once the warrior had raised its intensity to an unbearable agonistic pitch, could be brought under control and “domesticated.” The short answer is through the countervailing power of ritual. But this leaves us wondering even more in what way, by what means, the violent and unpredictable dynamism of sacrifice that defied all order was reduced to the closed and perfectly peaceful order of ritual. The very uncertainty and likelihood of catastrophe that is inherent in sacrifice clearly called forth its own opposite, the compelling urge for a stable and incontrovertible order. It called the ritualist to the forefront. Or rather, it turned the *ṛṣi*, the inspired visionary of the Vedic hymns, into the systematically thinking prescientific scientist whom we meet in the brāhmaṇa prose texts.<sup>37</sup> The latter is still viewed as a *ṛṣi* and the prose texts still employ the idiom of the inspired vision. But his “vision” is now concerned with the minutiae of a closed and fail-safe system of ritual. The strength of sacrifice had been its unpredictable openendedness. It set apart and enacted in the sacrificial arena the *ṛṣi*’s vision of the ultimate ground of being, the irresolvable tangle of life and death. It did so by locking the participants in an ever-renewed contest. As the tangle of life and death remained forever undecided, so the participants had to keep on enacting the exchange and reversals of the two incompatible opposites in the sacrificial contest. This was the nerve center of the world of sacrifice. And it was at this point that the attack of the *ṛṣi* turned ritualist set in. The ambivalent relationship of life and death was played out in the contest. If the uncertainty and ambivalence of sacrifice had to be turned into certainty, the contest had to be overcome. This in turn meant the removal of the opponent from the sacrificial arena. And this was exactly what was achieved through the deployment of ritual. It was on this issue that the ritualist’s vision turned.

### 2.3

That the Vedic ritualists were keenly aware of the issue they were tackling comes out with exemplary clarity in the ritualistic myth of the sacrificial contest between Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, and Mṛtyu, Death, in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa.<sup>38</sup> “At that time the ‘weapons of sacrifice’ (*yajñāyudhāni*) were the same as these ‘weapons’ [used] now-adays in sacrifice. What is chanted, what is recited, what is being acted [i.e., the three com-

partments of the classical standardized liturgy, the chanting of the *udgātr*, the recitation of the *hotr*, and the acts of the *adhvaryu*] that was Prajāpati's panoply (*senā*). What, on the other hand, is sung accompanied by the lute, what dancing there is, what is frivolously acted (*ṛthācaryate*), that was *Mr̥tyu*'s panoply. The panoplies of both were equally strong; as much as the one had, so much had the other. For a long time, during many years, they tried to defeat each other without a decision being reached." Finally, however, Prajāpati obtained the decisive "vision": "He saw this *sampad*, the equivalence, in sacrifice, this *saṃkhyāna* or numerical coincidence"—as, for instance, the coincidence of the number of days and nights with that of the chanted verses.<sup>39</sup> "Therewith he defeated *Mr̥tyu*. When defeated, his soma wasted away.<sup>40</sup> Falling backwards, to the western end of the sacrificial arena, he took refuge in the hall of the women (*patnīsālā*)."

The point of the story is, of course, not that Prajāpati defeated his opponent. Mythologically one would hardly expect any other outcome, although here again, as we will see, ambivalence is not lacking. The essential interest of the story is in the way Prajāpati bested his opponent. He managed in the end to win not because he was a stronger, better equipped contender and sacrificer—the two are explicitly said to be equally strong—but exclusively through his "vision" of *sampad* or *saṃkhyāna* and the intricate arithmetic involved in establishing the symbolic equivalences. Now this does indeed constitute the prime intellectual tool of Vedic ritualism in setting up the identifications that anchored macrocosmos and microcosmos in the ritual enclosure by separating out the cosmic elements and identifying them one by one with the discrete elements of the ritual—acts, words, implements. In this way the ritualists construed a rational-mechanistic universe centered on as well as contained in the ritual enclosure. The cosmic processes were reduced to the closed and strictly ordered process of ritual, manipulated by the expert "who knows thus" (*ya evaṃ veda*)—that is, the one who knows the equivalences. The intellectual basis of this construction, the "science of ritual," was Prajāpati's "vision." Here, according to their own restatement of the sacrificial contest, lay the key to the breakthrough that enabled the ritualists to turn the dualistic and insecure world of sacrifice into the monolithic security of the closed ritual universe.

But the most important result of the ritualists' breakthrough was the removal of the partner and adversary, Death, from the place of sacrifice. As the second part of our brāhmaṇa passage makes clear, it is through equivalence that *Mr̥tyu*'s sacrificial work is deprived of its competitive efficacy and brought in line with Prajāpati's ritual. Singing and playing the lute are equated with the chants (*stotra*) and recitations (*śāstra*) and the acts of Prajāpati's classical ritual, while the various parts of the lute are identified with standard ritual items. So *Mr̥tyu* and his works have lost their autonomous

status. Where there was opposition and conflict there is now equivalence and assimilation.

At this point it should be mentioned that our passage is meant to explain the *mahāvratā* festival. In its classical form it is a soma ritual according to the standard paradigm of pressing, preparing, offering, and drinking the soma beverage, combined with vegetal offerings and animal sacrifice. As such it fills the penultimate day of the yearlong string of similar soma days. In its middle, the usual slot for such insertions, a curious assembly of archaic nonstandard rites are inserted: different kinds of contests, among them a chariot race, target shooting, a tug-of-war, dancing, singing, drumming, swinging, lute playing, and even copulation.<sup>41</sup> In fact, we have here the remnants of a rowdy and orgiastic New Year festival. The breakup of the original festival in separate regularized items and their insertion in the overarching standard paradigm of the soma ritual show that the festival, or rather its remnants, has been made dependent on and subservient to the *śrauta* system of ritual. Thus, the actual sacrifice has been taken out of its context and remolded according to the standard *śrauta* code. What remains is no more than a curiously intriguing sideshow. And so we notice that these peculiarities turn out to be expendable, for in the end the word *mahāvratā* comes to designate a normal “laud” or *stotra*, the first of the afternoon lauds of the similarly named soma day, formed in accordance with the standard rules.<sup>42</sup>

In this way the adversary was, like Mṛtyu, spirited out of the ritual proceedings. Or rather his independent opposing action was overcome and amalgamated into the monolithic standard ritual. How this was viewed by the ritualists is brought out in our story. Mṛtyu is not simply beaten and eliminated. He is utterly defeated and humbled to the point of taking refuge with the women, but this is not the end of him—nor can it be even in the best of all ritual worlds. The words in our text that come after Mṛtyu’s unheroic flight to the *patnīśālā* seem corrupt, but they are highly suggestive of a similar misadventure of Tvaṣṭṛ, the warrior god Indra’s enemy.<sup>43</sup> In this case too the occasion is a sacrificial battle. Indra kills Tvaṣṭṛ’s son, the triple-headed Viśvarūpa, “All-Form”—an embodiment of sacrifice, taking with his three heads the soma beverage, the *surā* liquor, and the sacrificial food—by cutting off the three heads.<sup>44</sup> The enraged Tvaṣṭṛ, therefore, excludes Indra from participation in sacrifice. Indra, of course, cannot take this deadly insult. Brandishing his *vajra* weapon he storms up to Tvaṣṭṛ on his place of sacrifice. At that, “Tvaṣṭṛ falling backwards, to the western end of the sacrificial arena, took refuge with the women; there [Indra] did not pursue him; therefore Tvaṣṭṛ is worshipped at [the place of] the wives [this refers to the standard *patnīśamyāja* offerings made in the *gārhapatyā* at the end of the ritual and destined for Soma, Tvaṣṭṛ, the (gods’) Wives and

Agni, Lord of the House]<sup>45</sup> therefore too one does not kill one who has taken refuge with the women.”<sup>46</sup> The wording of Tvaṣṭṛ’s falling backward and finding refuge with the women is almost literally the same as in Mr̥tyu’s case. So it would seem that Mr̥tyu, just as Tvaṣṭṛ, is not annihilated. In fact, Tvaṣṭṛ’s activity does not end in the wives’ residence. When Indra, “after drinking the soma” (and all but disintegrating under the impact of the ill-gotten beverage), went away, Tvaṣṭṛ offers the remainder of the soma in the fire and thereby conjures up the monstrous demon Vṛtra, which leads to another version of Indra’s dragon fight. Such an awesomely exciting sequel is purposefully excluded in the sacrificial contest of Prajāpati and Mr̥tyu. Yet his retreat to the women’s quarter, inglorious as it is, does not deprive him of all significance. In connection with the *patnīsamīyāja* offerings we learn elsewhere that the gods, being attacked from the south and pursued to the north, entered the *āgnīdhriya* fire hut together with the wives. “Seeing them consorting with their wives the asuras turned back in shameful embarrassment.”<sup>47</sup> The gods’ resorting to their wives clearly has sexual overtones. They not only have resort to the women, they quite naturally consort with them. It does not seem to be different with Tvaṣṭṛ. The *patnīsamīyāja* offerings to the Wives in the *gārhapatya* are explicitly equated with sexual union and therefore properly screened off on the east side from the view of the gods who are waiting at the oblatinal hearth, the *āhavanīya* at the eastern end.<sup>48</sup> We may safely assume that something similar is implied by Mr̥tyu’s refuge with the wives. Even more, this seems to be suggested by the corrupt passage that, however it is to be read, does speak of the defeated Mr̥tyu’s being together with the women.<sup>49</sup> It may also be significant that the sacrificer’s wife is led up to the immolated victim to sprinkle it with water, which is explained as a quickening of the dead animal. “As to why it is the wife who sprinkles: the wife is a woman and from woman progeny is born here; thus he causes him [the sacrificer] to be procreated from that woman.”<sup>50</sup> The idea behind this rather abstract symbolism is made shockingly explicit in the prestigious horse sacrifice, when the first consort of the royal sacrificer is made to copulate with the immolated horse.<sup>51</sup>

There remains an indubitable ambivalence in Mr̥tyu’s defeat. As his festival has been deconstructed and its elements assimilated into Prajāpati’s standardized, classical ritual, so he has been himself reduced and assimilated by his conqueror. But he is still invisibly present to play his now subaltern but undeniable part in the organic process of life, death, and procreation that the ritual, however mechanistically conceived, has to take into account. That is the reason, it would seem, that the distinctive rites of Mr̥tyu’s competing sacrifice, although homologized to the standard elements of the classical system of ritual and reduced to a expendable sideshow, were preserved.

Also in another way ritual thought gives expression to Mr̥tyu’s claims.

The gods, so we are told, were afraid of Death, in the form of the Year—that is, time—as the destroyer of life.<sup>52</sup> They strenuously sought immortality by toiling at the construction of the brick fire altar. As the altar is both (the reconstructed) Prajāpati and the Year, Death—who, as we saw, was assimilated by Prajāpati and in this context is therefore called “this Prajāpati”<sup>53</sup>—the proper construction of the altar would give the gods complete control over life and death and so let them attain immortality. They fail, however, by putting down either too many or too few bricks. It is, in other words, a problem of knowing the equivalence of the number of days in the year and the number of bricks. Prajāpati then teaches them the rule for the numbers of the categories of bricks (360, 36, 10,800) and thus gives them the knowledge of the equivalences that provides at the same time the rule for the proper execution of the ritual “work.” The gods then indeed become immortal. However, this leaves out Death. So a compact is made stipulating that Mṛtyu will receive the dead body as his share. “He who is to become immortal will become immortal either through knowledge [of the equivalences] or through the ritual work after parting with his body.”<sup>54</sup> This reads like a commentary on Prajāpati’s victory over Mṛtyu by means of equivalence. But at the same time equivalence means the assimilation of Death, and so Prajāpati is also the Year, Death, of whom the gods were afraid. Through the knowledge of the equivalences the sacrificer not only becomes the cosmic Prajāpati but thereby also assimilates Death. “Death becomes the self of him who knows thus; when he departs from this world, he passes into that self and becomes immortal, for Death is his own self.”<sup>55</sup> Here ambivalence is glaringly present. And Death still wants the body as his share.

However, the thrust of Prajāpati’s contest with Mṛtyu comes out at the end of the story. Having detailed the homologization whereby Mṛtyu’s rites are subordinated to Prajāpati’s classical soma ritual, our text triumphantly declares: “Now there is no *samsava*, no sacrificial contest [anymore]. What was the second sacrifice that wasted away.”<sup>56</sup> The sacrifice is only one. Prajāpati is the sacrifice.” What is so emphatically proclaimed here in these brief and lapidary words is the breakthrough of the monistic conception of sacrifice—“the sacrifice is only one.” There is no rival contender anymore. Significantly it is not the warrior Indra who is the protagonist in the decisive contest, nor is it the collectivity of the gods, but Prajāpati alone. As a related text points out: “They say that the devas and asuras contended with each other, but it was not the devas and asuras who contended; Prajāpati and Mṛtyu were the contenders.”<sup>57</sup> The passage points up both the continuity with the older dualistic order and the novelty of the decisive contest that brings Prajāpati definitively to center stage. While Indra and his various demon enemies or the devas and the asuras stand for the dualistic cosmogony that is the ever-again reenacted but never definitive sacrifice, Pra-



jāpati is the single creator, the cosmic man who has the discrete universe emanate out of himself. As such he shares in the nature of Vṛtra, the “Obstruction,” who holds Agni and Soma, and with them the whole universe, within himself. But whereas Vṛtra must be killed in a deadly sacrificial contest to set the universe in motion, Prajāpati is himself both sacrificer and victim—“Prajāpati is the sacrifice,” as the triumphant proclamation has it. He is the monistic “Dieu-Sacrifice”<sup>58</sup> who has assimilated his opponent, Death, into himself. Death is no longer the opponent but his own self.

As Indra—with whom the sacrificer is still often identified—was before, Prajāpati is now the prototype of the sacrificer. The guests are no longer the sacrificer’s rivals, as the Aṅgirasas were both the invited guests and the rivals of the Ādityas, but learned ritual experts “who know thus,” as the ubiquitous phrase has it, that is, those who know the equivalences.<sup>59</sup> Even if the original tension and strife that were purposely intensified and brought to a breaking point in the sacrificial contest between hosts and guests still occasionally surface in the various ways in which the ritual expert can harm his patron, it is on the basis of his mechanistic-ritualistic knowledge of the equivalences and not under the organic compulsion of the contest that the expert officiant would act against his patron.<sup>60</sup> It is strange that we do not hear of any direct sanctions against the perpetration of such a glaring breach of confidence. Apparently the old contest ideology is still effective in playing up the essential ambivalence of sacrifice. But the main point is that such behavior on the part of the expert would simply constitute a technical-ritual mistake that can be repaired by equally technical means. It is no longer an astute move by a participant in the contest.

As a matter of principle the single sacrificer stands on his place of sacrifice as the sole and unrivaled master of his ritual universe, identifying himself with Prajāpati, for “now there is no *saṃsava* anymore.” And if there is, it is no more than the ritualistically reparable mistake of two individual enclosures situated too near to each other.

## 2.4

Short as it is, the ritualistic myth of the decisive contest shows us in exemplary concision precisely what the ritualists sought to achieve and indeed did achieve. It can rightly be called the “charter myth” of ritualism. The two operative points are, first, the “vision” of equivalence that enables Prajāpati, and after him the sacrificer, to assimilate his opponent, Death, and his “work,” and second (and by the same token) the fact that the ground is cut from under the sacrificial contest. It was not the institution of sacrifice per se that was attacked, overcome, and eliminated. Such active militancy would not even have been necessary. The institution was by its very nature always on the brink of collapse and might have been removed from its rul-

ing position with comparative ease, as happened in the “heterodox” movements such as Buddhism and Jainism. The Vedic ritualists, however, preserved sacrifice and brought it under the strict control of an ever more elaborate web of ritual rules. But in doing so they effected a fundamental change. Sacrifice was turned into ritualism—a transformation no less radical than Buddhism or Jainism and, in fact, of a similar nature.

The effectiveness of sacrifice had been in the central breaking point of tension and strife that was the dynamic pivot of the dualistic order of the universe. Taking the opposite partner out of the game the ritualists not only removed the uncertainty inherent in sacrifice but created a monistic order that relegated all strife and conflict outside its closed world of ritual. In brief, sacrifice had contained within itself the central breach line of dynamic conflict; ritualism on the other hand removed the breach line and placed it between its own conception of sacrifice and the surrounding world of conflict. In this way the ancient Indian ritualists created a turning point that in its widely ramified consequences can be viewed as an “axial” breakthrough.<sup>61</sup>

To appreciate the significance of this breakthrough we should first give more detailed attention to the development of ritualism and its impact on the institution of sacrifice. The first thing that strikes one in the Vedic *śrauta* or so-called solemn ritual is its utterly systematic character both in its presentation in the texts, especially in the “guidelines” or *sūtras*, and in the actual proceedings that narrowly follow the texts.<sup>62</sup> As for the texts, it should be kept in mind that the whole liturgy is broken down in the four Vedas—*R̥gveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda*, and *Atharvaveda*—with each Veda being proper to one of the four groups of officiants, respectively, reciters (*hotr*), chanters (*udgātṛ*), *adhvaryu* (charged with the acts), and *brahman* (masculine, to be distinguished from the neuter). It should be noticed in passing that the *Atharvaveda* as the fourth Veda assigned to the *brahman* has only a very limited role to play—as has the *brahman* himself who, although rated as the most important, remains mostly silent and inactive, his specific function being to repair ritual mistakes as the *bhīṣaj*, the healer, of the sacrifice. In practical terms it is the three other Vedas that actually deal with the liturgy and are known as the “triple knowledge” (*trayī vidyā*). Apart from the intricate rules for each of the officiants, the complication consists in the coordination and dovetailing of the four—actually mostly three—kinds of operation.

The principle of the textual arrangement of the ritual in each Veda and especially in the *Yajurveda* dealing with the *adhvaryu*’s part—the actual *karma* or “work” as against the *mantra* or verbal activity of reciters and chanters—is from the simpler to the more complicated, with more elements being added at each step. The basic act is the simple *ābhi*, the libation, mostly of ghee, by the *adhvaryu*, who also pronounces the pertinent

*mantra* or *yajus* formula. The verb that is used for this act is *juhoti*. The more complicated forms, designated by the verb *yajati*, involve the *hotṛ*, who recites the invitory (*puro'nuvākyā*) and the offering verse (*yājyā*) at the instigation of the *adhvaryu*, who makes the offering at the *hotṛ*'s cry of *rauṣaṭ* after the offering verse. This is also the procedure for vegetal food offerings (*iṣṭi*). This basic pattern is further enlarged in the animal sacrifice (*paśubandha*). In the soma sacrifice the proceedings are still further elaborated. The successive scoopings of the beverage are each followed by a *stotra* or "laud" of the *udgātṛ* and his acolytes succeeded by a *śastra*, a recitation of one of the *hotṛ* officiants; then libations of soma are made (in the *yajati* way) and the soma is drunk by sacrificer and officiants who invite each other to drink from each other's cups. The increasing elaboration, from the simple *āhuti* to the full soma sacrifice, brings with it an increase in the number of officiants, four in the *iṣṭi*, six in the *paśubandha*, and the full complement of sixteen (or seventeen) being reached in the soma ritual.

The structure of the ritual is determined by the encompassment of the simpler forms by the more complicated ones. Thus the twice-daily milk offering, the *agnihotra*, essentially consists of two *āhutis* of boiled milk. The more complicated *yajati* type of offerings marks the ritual complex of the *iṣṭi* or vegetal offering of a cake or a porridge. But the *iṣṭi* also contains simpler *āhutis* of the *juhoti* type. The animal sacrifice, *paśubandha*, is combined with the preparation and offering of a vegetal cake, the *paśupurodāśa*, while the soma ritual is preceded and followed by an animal sacrifice and is itself interwoven with the proceedings of an animal sacrifice, the *savanīya paśubandha*. In this way the whole of the *śrauta* ritual is structured as a series of boxings or concentric circles.

The "boxing" device also determines the structure of each separate sacrifice and of its parts. Therefore the beginning of each complex has to correspond to its end. "He should be *adhvaryu* who concludes the sacrifice where he has put it in motion."<sup>63</sup> Thus, for instance, the soma complex starts with a *prāyanīyā-iṣṭi*, which is exactly matched by an *udayanīyā-iṣṭi* at the end.<sup>64</sup> The striking result is that the ritual of each sacrifice presents itself both as a lineal succession of acts and utterances—the usual image is that of a straight path—and as a cyclical process in which the end joins the beginning. "What is its beginning that is its end and what its end is that is its beginning."<sup>65</sup> Hence the riddle question, in what way a sleeping dog, rolled up on himself, is similar to the sacrifice, namely, by adding the last verse of the last *stotra* to the first, the *bahispavamāna-stotra*. But the point of the riddle is in the simultaneity of well-bounded lineality and full cyclicity.

That the structure of the ritual does indeed contain an irresolvable riddle—a transformation of the enigma of sacrifice—will have to engage our attention later.<sup>66</sup> But in the first place we should be clear about the artificial, well-thought-out, and in that sense "rational," nature of the *śrauta*

ritual's structure. Even if the later theorists of the Mīmāṃsā posit the ritual system as *nitya*, eternal, and *apauruṣeya*, of ultramundane origin, it is not an "organic" given but a "mechanistic" construction. This is already clear in the discussions on the minutiae of ritual procedure in the Vedic prose texts. Interestingly these discussions are often cast in the ancient mold of "vision" and verbal contest. But the clearest evidence of the artificial, systematic nature of the ritual is in the *paribhāṣās*, the metarules that govern the construction of the ritual system.<sup>67</sup>

Most important for the construction of the ritual is the distinction the *paribhāṣās* make between the *tantra*, the "woof" or texture, and the main part, the *pradhāna*.<sup>68</sup> The *tantra* comprises the auxiliary acts, or *angas*, "members," of the ritual complex of a given sacrifice. It is the general and, as the name indicates, the largely unchangeable part of the complex and the same for all sacrifices of the same type (vegetal or *iṣṭi*, animal or *paśubandha*, and soma sacrifice). The *pradhāna*, comprising the main offerings, is the specific and variable part. Although the pattern is the same for each type it differs as to oblatinal material (*havis*), deity or deities (*devatā*)—both involving the mantras to be applied—and the abandonment formula (*tyāga*) that is specific in the mention of the deity. This structure also means that more than one *pradhāna* offering can be combined within one *tantra* so as to form a single complex. Moreover, the *pradhāna* also contains at its end the slot where further insertions can be made, such as, for instance, the proclamation of the king during the animal sacrifice on the eve of the soma sacrifice that is marked by the king's unction. The unction is inserted in its turn in the soma paradigm in the midday part before the scooping out of the soma beverage for Mahendra, which is the usual place for such insertions.<sup>69</sup> Also the specific *mahāvratā* rites we have discussed are inserted *en bloc* at this place.<sup>70</sup> All this clearly shows the artificial, highly systematic nature of the *śrauta* ritual.

The *śrauta* ritual, then, confronts us with fully thought out ritual complexes of well-defined physical and verbal acts that form, according to stated rules, the variously named but little differing and repetitious sacrifices. Incidentally, the limited set of well-defined and strictly regimented acts was the "weaponry" that Prajāpati successfully deployed against the "weapons" of his opponent, Death. The smooth homologization of the two kinds of weapons that gave Prajāpati his victory suggests that they are felt to be very much akin to each other. Or, more precisely, the typical *śrauta* liturgy of act, chant, and recitation seems to have been developed out of the "disorderly" proceedings of Mṛtyu.

There is, of course, a vast difference between, for instance, the rousing singing, lute playing, and dancing on the one hand and the hieratic stylization of the repetitious *stotra* chant on the other. Construction and execution of the latter are regulated and standardized with utter precision. The verses

of the *stotra* are formed from R̥gveda stanzas—a number of syllables are replaced with *stobhas*, nonsense syllables. Each verse is then broken down in five parts executed by three chanters—the *prastāva* by the *prastotr*, the *udgītha* by the *udgātr*, the *pratihāra* (the “response”) by the *pratihartr*, the *upadrava* again by the *udgātr*, and finally the *nidhana* by all three. Indeed, the classical operation of the chanters is a high point of technicality and artificial construction based on the arithmetic of numerical equivalences. Nevertheless, the exacting and perfectly orderly technical operation is bluntly equated with a *vajra*, the weapon with which Indra killed the demon Vṛtra. Thus it is said that in chanting the *prastāva* of the *rathantara sāman*—the melody of the second *stotra* of the midday part of the soma liturgy—the *prastotr* hurls a *vajra* against the *udgātr*. The latter, by performing his part (the *udgītha*) in a strong voice, is said to hurl the *vajra* back again.<sup>71</sup> One wonders how the fanciful *vajra*-slinging could be associated with the minutiae of the *stotra*, unless the original pattern of the performance had been a contest, as in fact the whole sacrifice had been. And could not the intricate repartition of the chanting among the three chanters derive from the same origin?

The equation of the *stotra* with the *vajra* also occurs elsewhere. Thus the very first *stotra* of the soma sacrifice, the *bahispavamāna*, is said to be a triple (*trivṛt*) *vajra* hurled at Death.<sup>72</sup> But then the imagery changes. “As long as this triple *vajra* moves day by day along these [three] worlds, there will be no *devāsura*, no fight between the gods and the asuras. The fire lights upwards, the wind moves horizontally, the sun burns downwards. These [three] watch each other relentlessly. How could there be a *devāsura* when these [three] are thus around?” Here, it would seem, we see the change from the dualistic world of the sacrificial contest to the monolithically ordered ritualism of a monistic world. Accordingly the text continues with an exposition of the homologizing numbers game.

In brief, what has happened is that the contest was replaced by ritual. The sacrificial contest obviously had its rules and structure. But the structure of the contest and its rules were concerned with the interaction of the parties opposing each other. They were the conventions setting the pattern of the game; they were not the game itself, predetermining its outcome. On the contrary, the outcome did not depend on the rules of the game but on the moves and countermoves of the parties—not excluding deceit and trickery as, for instance, the exploitation of the blind spot in a compact: not by day, or by night, so Indra bests his enemy Namuci during twilight. However, when the opponent was excluded from active participation in the sacrificial arena, the place he had vacated had to be filled by the mechanistic contrivance of ritual. In this way the ritualists deployed their system against the uncertainty of sacrifice. Once it was put in the place of the opponent the rule of ritual had to be even further elaborated and refined so as to fill

out ever more exhaustively the vacant space. Ritual can only generate more ritual—or it will disintegrate, the threat that all order must face.

## 2.5

How did the ritualists set about their task? Although the system of ritual they devised was a revolutionary departure from agonistic sacrifice, they did not aim at replacing sacrifice with an entirely new creation of their own. Nor is this what one should expect. Their aim was to control sacrifice, not to replace it. To achieve control they had to assimilate all manner of activity concerned with sacrifice—not only the contest, although this was the central dynamic, but also the auxiliary acts (*tantra* or *anga*). This meant recasting all such activity in the mold of the limited set of strictly defined liturgical acts. Let us look at a few examples. For instance, the cutting of the tree for the sacrificial stake (*yūpa*) comes to look like the immolation of the victim—preceded by a libation of ghee, anointing of the tree with the remaining ghee, and application of a grass stalk on the place where the first cut is to be made. The parallelism of immolation and tree cutting lies, of course, near at hand, but once the cutting of the tree was made part of the ritual complex it required the application of the standardized immolatory acts, notwithstanding the obvious difference in nature and function of victim and tree. Similarly, the standardized rites connected with the omentum of the immolated victim have to be executed even with the sacrificial horse, although its small and thin omentum, quite different from that of the bovine, hardly lends itself to the operation.<sup>73</sup>

Another example is originally a simple matter of disposal. The grass layer (the *barhis*) strewn on the extended place of sacrifice to the east of the fire “hall” (the *śālā*) is to be disposed of by burning. At the end of the soma ritual, when one is about to leave the place of sacrifice, the grass is kindled with a fire brand taken from the oblatinal fire. The straw fire is then a proper sacrificial one, and for good measure an offering of barley or rice groats is made in it—ostensibly to pay off one’s debt to Yama, the god of death.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless it clearly is a disposal operation that moreover appears to be linked with the related activity of clearing the bush or burning grassland. The latter is, of course, less suitable for the grass bed (the *vedi*) in the *śālā*, where normally the vegetal sacrifices, such as those on the new and full moon days, take place. It is likely that the *śālā* itself with all its contents would catch fire. So here the *barhis* is thrown on the oblatinal hearth at the time of the *samistayajus* libation that concludes the sacrifice. This is the procedure of the Black Yajurveda.<sup>75</sup> But although the burning is neatly incorporated in the ritual of the burnt oblation, this is not yet good enough for the younger White Yajurveda. The latter makes the disposal of the *barhis* into a separate full-scale oblation, with its own *svāhā* call and *tyāga* formula,

after the *samistayajus* offering.<sup>76</sup> What was a simple matter of disposal that was not yet considered part of the ritual complex by the older brāhmaṇas has now been brought under the expansive sway of the ritual system and recast as an oblation in accordance with the standardized pattern.

The prime example, however, of the ritualists' procedure is provided by the fate of the war and racing chariot (*ratha*).<sup>77</sup> It clearly belonged to the original agonistic scenario. The gods are often said to run chariot races for the repartition of the goods of life. What is more, the chariot is still preserved in full antiquarian splendor in the grand royal ritual complexes, the *vājapeya*, the *rājasūya* or "royal consecration," and the horse sacrifice (*aśva-medha*), the most prestigious of all, as well as in the *mahāvratā* New Year festival. The chariot once had a prominent place in the sacrificial arena. And as a reduced and impoverished remnant it is still there in the ritual of establishing the sacrificial fires (*agnyādhya*) when, simultaneously with the carrying of the fire to the oblatinal hearth (*āhavanīya*) at the eastern end of the ritual enclosure, a chariot, or at least a chariot wheel, is rolled in the same direction.<sup>78</sup> That the chariot was not just a harmless piece of folklore to satisfy the tastes of the royal clientele has already become clear when we come across the curious mishap of a chariot passing between somebody's fires.<sup>79</sup> The ritualists typically deal with this implausible accident as a ritual mistake that calls for a remedial rite, but it clearly suggests not even a sportive chariot race but a battle at the point where the eastern direction marked by the *gārhapatya* and the *āhavanīya* is crossed by the northern direction, right in the middle of the place of sacrifice. But we need not go so far in order to see that the chariot is too much of a weapon to fit in smoothly with the standard ritual "weapons." So how did the ritualists deal with it?

One way was to keep the chariot as part of the system, albeit under strict control, as is the case in the elaborate royal rituals. The ritual system offers the possibility of inserting such interludes as we have seen in the case of the *mahāvratā*, and so we see the full chariot race inserted in the *vājapeya*. But, of course, it is brought fully under ritualistic regulation and so presents the distinct oddity of a race with a predetermined outcome. In the *rājasūya* the matter is handled in a different way, as a solitary chariot drive around the racing course but, interestingly, combined with arrow shooting and a sham cattle raid.<sup>80</sup> The contrast with the monistic ritual is obvious, and, at the very least, it takes considerable care to arrange the insertion in such a way that everything runs smoothly without mishaps and without creating too much of a break in the standard ritual. The ritualists do indeed discuss whether there is not another way to incorporate the chariot race. "About this they say: they go away from the sacrifice if they run a race outside the place of sacrifice of the soma ritual, when the soma beverage has been pressed. The sacrifice is as great as the place of sacrifice. So they should run the race up to the end of the sacrificial enclosure." But this

would give them hardly any room. Therefore another typically ritualistic opinion is given: "He should just put his foot on the chariot and take it down again. In that way the race is run and [at the same time] not run (*sṛtaṃ cāsṛtāmca*)."<sup>81</sup> But for all the sophisticated ambiguity this is not felt to be satisfactory either. The conclusion of our text is that after all one must have the real thing.<sup>81</sup>

Clearly, the chariot race presents a problem. But if it is to be retained in the system, it must be further ritualized. An interesting illustration of what this means is provided by the most critical point of the race, the rounding of the post at the end of the course. There the competitors crowd in on each other, attempting to get around the post first by the shortest and swiftest turn. At that point the chance of fatal mishaps is greatest. Significantly, some perfectly sensible instructions on this critical maneuver have been incorporated in the ritual as a *praiśa*, "summons." The gist appears to be neither to give the competitor room to pass between the post and one's own chariot nor to take the turn too short and thus risk turning over or hitting the post.<sup>82</sup> Of course, this is hardly relevant since there is no competition anymore. The instruction is turned into a mantra. But this still leaves another problem of a purely ritualistic nature. The usual way for the racing chariot to round the post was by a left turn, as it was in the Roman circus, but the left turn is indeed "sinister," inauspicious. Perhaps this may reflect an original association with funerary games, but for our purpose the relevant point is that the "sinister" turn was bound to be problematic in a ritual system that was intended to exclude everything sinister and threatening. This may well be the background of a stated ritualistic rule that requires a clockwise turn to be matched by a counterclockwise one and vice versa.<sup>83</sup> Thus, for instance, on completion of the prestigious brick-built fire altar—normally it is an earth mound—water is to be poured around it. This has to be done while going thrice from left to right. Then follows another triple circumambulation in the opposite direction, from right to left, this time without pouring water.<sup>84</sup> In the case of the chariot, apart from simply changing the direction of the turn and prescribing a clockwise rounding of the post, a more sophisticated solution was to apply the rule of matching turns so as to neutralize the left turn by a turn in the opposite direction. This is indeed what a supplement to the Baudhāyana Śrautasūtra prescribes.<sup>85</sup> Referring to the instructions of the charioteers mentioned above, this text tells us that, according to Baudhāyana himself, they should first make a turn to the right, then make for the post and round it with a turn to the left. Another authority, Śāliki, prescribes the same curious maneuver but reverses the directions, first left and then right. In terms of ritual symmetry this solution is a satisfactory, even elegant one. It is, however, hard to see what this should mean in terms of chariot racing. In fact, it is perfectly meaningless. It only answers to the inner logic of the ritual system.<sup>86</sup>



We see, then, that the chariot race is hardly tenable within the compass of the ritual system. There is, however, yet another possibility that graphically illustrates a different method of the ritualists for dealing with the original contest scenario. This method consists in taking it apart and reusing its disjoined parts separately. This is the case of the chariot's impoverished appearance in the rite for establishing the fires (*agnyādheya*). When the first *śrauta* fire has been produced from the fire drill and installed on the western *gārhapatya* hearth, a burning piece of wood has to be brought to the eastern oblatinal hearth, the *āhavanīya*. While the fire is carried along the middle line of the place of sacrifice, the chariot or wheel we have already discussed is rolled in the same direction on the south side and, on the north side, a horse that was somewhat superfluously present at the drilling of the fire is equally led eastward to the *āhavanīya*. It seems obvious that the three isolated items—fire, wheel, and horse—form one whole. Indeed, one text, the Vaitāna Sūtra, puts them together again by having the fire carried on a chariot drawn by the horse.<sup>87</sup> It can be shown that this rite of carrying the fire forward was originally a raiding expedition.<sup>88</sup> Incidentally, we also notice that the action with the chariot is now restricted to the confines of the sole enclosure. One does not leave the place of sacrifice anymore. But for the present the important point is that we have here a perfect instance, on a small scale, of the ritualists' *modus operandi*. They disassembled the whole expedition, kept only the distinctive items of fire, horse, and wheel, and handled them each separately. Breaking up the functional and meaningful whole into small details, each insignificant in itself, they dissolved the deadly risk of the contest, leaving only the *dissecta membra* of its scenario.

But, however much the chariot was reduced and dismembered, it was still there—a meaningless remnant of a discredited scenario, needlessly encumbering the ritual. The proper way to deal with it was provided by the logic of identification, the intellectual principle and justification of ritualism. This logic carries the process of amalgamation to its definitive conclusion. The chariot was “identified away” and replaced with equivalent elements from the standardized ritualistic arsenal—as were Mrtyu's “weapons.” Thus, for instance, there is a particular one-day soma ritual, the *viśvajicchilpa*, “artifice of the all-winner.”<sup>89</sup> Notwithstanding its intriguing name, the “artifice” appears to be no more than a particular but unsurprising arrangement of its chants, in accordance with the standard rules. The first, or *pavamāna*, “purifying,” chants of the midday and afternoon rounds are each composed on eighteen verses. This detail is equated with the two wheels of the chariot. So, “this soma sacrifice is a wheeled one.”<sup>90</sup> The identification of the two *stotras* with wheels is, however, not so arbitrary as it would seem. The *viśvajicchilpa* belongs to a group of one-day soma rituals, the *sādyaskras*, in which the chariot is still present, albeit in the somewhat marginal function of carrying the heralds when they go out to announce

the impending sacrifice to the officiants. There is even the suggestion of a chariot race on this occasion.<sup>91</sup> However, in the *viśvajicchilpa* itself the chariot has been completely “identified away” and replaced by the liturgical “wheels.” What remains is a standard soma ritual like any other, distinguished only by the minutiae of its liturgical arrangements.

In a similar way the ritualists finally rid the *agnyādheya* of the chariot’s last remnant, the wheel that had to be rolled forward simultaneously with the fire being carried to the *āhavanīya*. In the end the quaint little rite is canceled, and in its stead a twelve-day period is prescribed, marked by “season offerings,” *rtuhomas*. This period of twelve days, which in the usual way is equivalent to the year, is then easily equated with a revolving “wheel.” The real wheel is then no longer needed. This stage is finally reached in the Vādhūla tradition of the Black Yajurveda, which especially in its *agnyādheya* ritual shows ample evidence of continuing ritualistic reworking.<sup>92</sup>

An even more standardized way of dealing with the *ratha* or chariot is its identification with the *rathantara* melody. This melody, and the *stotra* that is chanted on it, is the “chariot of the gods” (*devaratha*).<sup>93</sup> The syllables of the *stotra* are equated with the spokes of the wheels. The *stotra* finds support in each successive syllable, in the same way that the wheel firmly stands on spoke after spoke. Obviously, this could be said of any *stotra*, but the further explanation tells us more about the original background of the otherwise rather arbitrary and general equation of wheel spokes and syllables that does not reveal anything specific about the *rathantara*. In an explanation of the name and use of this *sāman* the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa tells us that it was by means of the *rathantara* that the gods went upward to heaven. But “the asuras and rakṣasas, nine times nine of them, covered these worlds; they were called *Rathas*—chariot [warriors]. The gods, however, having chanted the *rathantara* mounted it [as a *ratha*] and went to heaven. They said: ‘we have overcome (*atāriṣma*) these Rathas’; that is why the *rathantara*, overcoming the Rathas, has its name. He who knows thus overcomes (*tarati*) his enemy.”<sup>94</sup> The image evoked is that of a chariot battle, the asuras blocking the way with their *rathas* while the gods push through on their own chariots and reach heaven. We have already seen that the chanting of the *rāthantara* in the soma ritual is somewhat surprisingly equated with the hurling back and forth of Indra’s *vajra* weapon. Here we get a fuller scenario suggesting two chariot forces engaging each other at the intersection of the heavenward direction from west to east and the south-north line of the asura blockade “covering these worlds”—a scenario we already noticed in connection with the “mistake” of a chariot passing between the *gārhapatyā* and *āhavanīya* hearths.

Now the relevant *stotra*—the *rāthantara prṣṭha*—is performed in the midday part of the soma ritual exactly at the point where the insertions, such as the chariot race and other “royal” rites (and also the special *mahā-*

*vrata* rites), are made.<sup>95</sup> In other words, the *rāthantara* laud and actual chariot race practically coincide. This not only explains the warrior imagery associated with the otherwise uneventful chant but also suggests a close association of the chant with the chariot race. In different terms, the *rāthantara* chant is the ritualistic “weapon” that is the equivalent of the chariot race—as Prajāpati’s liturgical “weapons” were “seen” by him to be equivalent to Mṛtyu’s arsenal. And as Mṛtyu’s panoply was taken over and amalgamated by Prajāpati into his own systematically construed ritual, so the chariot race was taken over and “identified away” by the *rāthantara* chant. In the same way as the original *mahāvratā* chant, construed according to the rules of *stotra* construction, the *rāthantara* chant came to replace the actual chariot contest that did not fit anymore into the fully elaborated artificial system of ritual and even threatened to break it up.

At this point, where the chariot race and similar rites are being replaced by standardized liturgical operations such as the *rāthantara* laud, the climax of the ritualistic endeavor was reached. Through the knowledge of the equivalences the ritualists had succeeded in ridding sacrifice of the disruptive tension and strife that found its outlet in the sacrificial arena. In the place of the threatening uncertainty of the contest they had mounted the intellectual construct of a closed, fully thought through, and systematized ritualism. But once they had achieved their goal, it turned out not to be what they wanted. They had solved the problem of sacrifice at the price of creating another but even more intractable problem. How were they to find the way back and reconnect their closed system of ritual to lived-in reality? As we will see, they could not.

## 2.6

Sacrifice, as the “play” of life and death, is by itself naturally set apart from everyday life on its own stage, its own playground. The conventional “rules of the game” of sacrifice further see to it that its bounds in time and space are clearly marked and maintained. But the arena is still part of society and open to it. The participation of the guests and rivals in the sacrificial feast makes it not only an intensely social occasion but also marks its weighty consequences. For on its outcome depends the periodic repartition of the “goods of life,” of honor and wealth. Sacrifice, in other words, was the pivot on which the world, not only the fate of the individual, turned. However, the exclusion of the guest and rival from active participation meant that sacrifice was thoroughly desocialized. The sacrificer now stood alone on his place of sacrifice and his erstwhile rivals had become his liturgical experts whose task it was to operate the intricate detail of the ritual mechanism that had come to fill the vacuum left by the excluded rival.

That explains the otherwise puzzling absence of *sacra publica*.<sup>96</sup> Even in the royal rituals, such as *rājasūya* and *āsvamedha*, the king is under the rule of ritual just like any other sacrificer.<sup>97</sup> Although the *rājasūya* is ostensibly concerned with the consecration of the king, its aim is not to turn the sacrificer into a king. As the Āpastamba Śrautasūtra states: “A king who desires to reach heaven should sacrifice with the *rājasūya* ritual.”<sup>98</sup> So he is already a king, whether consecrated or not, “who desires heaven,” like any common sacrificer.<sup>99</sup> The whole long, drawn-out *rājasūya*, lasting a couple of years—clearly it was originally a periodic ritual of renewal—is not concerned with society or polity but exclusively with the metaphysical fate of the single sacrificer as a private individual.

It is here that the ritualists run up against their problem. While sacrifice and ritual stand apart in a sphere of their own outside the diffusion and confusion of normal social life, the Vedic ritualists went far beyond this. With them the divide between ritualism and social life is maximal and even absolute. Elsewhere too we find fully developed ritualism, for instance, in the Taoist liturgy. But there, notwithstanding its hermetic, closed structure, the connection with the surrounding society is kept alive and visible as in the distribution of talismans or the ashes of the incense burner. The Taoist cult is very much moored in society. In the case of the Vedic ritual tradition one would be hard put to find anything like it. Even when it is said that the performance of the sacrificial ritual will benefit the world at large there is no evidence of any social spin-off. The transfer of wealth during the ritual in the form of *dakṣiṇā* gifts given to the officiants is not meant to have any further-reaching effects in society. Rather, the *dakṣiṇā* wealth should stay within the closed ritual circuit, for the officiant should keep it himself and, if he should want to dispose of it, he should wait for at least one or two days.<sup>100</sup> Through the exclusion of the rival partner, or rather through his incorporation in the single sacrificer, the ritualists had radically removed their ritual system from society. The unopposed single sacrificer is now the sole, static center of his ritualistic universe, contained within the ritual enclosure. And at the end of the ritual he must revert again, unchanged, to his normal state. “Here I am the one I am,” as the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa has him say at the end of the ritual, so as to lay off his divine persona and become a simple mortal again.<sup>101</sup> And there is no indication that the ritual has changed him or has added anything to him.

The ritualists, then, had burned their bridges behind them in a way not easily found elsewhere. Their ritualism laid out a comprehensively and exhaustively ordered divine world. But if it was to have any validity in mundane reality it had to encompass the human world as well. It may be instructive to see in a particular instance, the ritual of building the brick altar (*agnicayana*), how the ritualists attempted to reencompass both the divine

and the human worlds that, originally, had been at one in the sacrificial arena.<sup>102</sup> Before being installed on the newly built altar the fire has to be kept in a special fire pot, the *ukhā*, during a certain period—a year or an “equivalent” time. On alternate days the sacrificer is enjoined to take up the *ukhā*, make three steps (the so-called Viṣṇu strides), and put the pot back in place. On the intervening days this rite is replaced by the recitation of the *vātsapra* hymn.<sup>103</sup> The explanation given for this rite is that it represents the setting out on a trekking expedition with one’s fire—and one’s goods and chattels—on carts, while the *vātsapra* hymn is said to represent the unyoking at the resting places or encampments. In view of the abundant references to such raiding and transhumance treks, we need not doubt that this was indeed the original state of things. We have here another clear example of the conscious remolding of functional real-life activities into standard elements—Viṣṇu strides and recitation—of the artificially devised liturgical system. But, although the ritualists are quite aware of the origin of this alternating double rite, all contact with the cumbersome and, all told, risky realities is broken here. Instead there is only the pure abstraction of the three steps and the recitation. Generally the texts are satisfied to leave it at that.

But this is exactly what the later and thoroughly reflective Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa will not have. It therefore reinstates a wheeled vehicle and doubles the abstract rite with driving the fire about on a real cart.<sup>104</sup> The interesting point is the reason given for this return to mundane realities. Given the “equivalence” of the rite with its real-life substratum, such doubling would seem to be superfluous and, as already mentioned, most texts do not require it. However, “Agni is Prajāpati, and Prajāpati encompasses both gods and men. Now when the Viṣṇu strides [are made] and the *vātsapra* [recited], one makes up his divine form, and when he drives it [the fire] about he makes up his human form. Truly, then, he who, knowing thus, drives it about makes up that whole and entire Prajāpati. Therefore he should by all means drive it about.”<sup>105</sup> So, by performing the rite in both ways one makes it encompass both the world of the gods and the world of men. The reasoning is compelling and deeply sincere. But one fails to see how the injunction of driving aimlessly about with the fire could in any meaningful sense reestablish the lost contact with reality. The ritual has definitively broken away from the lived-in world. Its very perfection bars it from reaching out to the world and keeps it enclosed in its own abstract order. The encompassment so eagerly sought by the ritualists cannot be validly achieved.

We meet this concern for the encompassment of both worlds, the “divine” world of the perfect order of ritualism and the mundane world of human society, also in connection with the chariot race and its transformation into the standard *rāthantara* “laud.” There too it is argued that one

must win both races, the abstract divine race by means of the *rāthantara*, the human one with the *ratha*.<sup>106</sup> The result is the same doubling as in the case of carrying the fire in the fire pot. But here the problem the ritualists had created for themselves shows itself to be far more serious than the driving about with the fire, as harmless as it is aimless, would suggest. There is a conspicuous aporia. One should not go away from the place of sacrifice, because one would then break up the perfect ritualistic order that is coextensive with the place of sacrifice. Yet one should run a real race so as to encompass also the human world.

We already mentioned the solutions offered by the ritualists.<sup>107</sup> One solution is to keep the chariot race within the confines of the place of sacrifice. Given the limited standard size of the place of sacrifice and its encumbrance with various sheds and fires, this is a nice try but an obvious impossibility. The other solution—"running the race and not running it"—is not just too clever by half. It states the problem in the typically ritualistic terms of a sharp and unresolved ambiguity. Ritualism has turned the ambivalence of the sacrificial contest into a contradiction. Where the contest still held the world together through the ambivalent complementarity of the contending parties there is now the irreparable rift between the single sacrificer, ensconced on his place of sacrifice in a world of ritualistic perfection, and the rough and tumble of mundane rivalry and conflict. Where the two are to be brought together again—as they have to, the sacrificer being after all human—the result is contradiction. One should go on a trekking circuit while staying put in the same place; one should run the race and at the same time not run it; one should encompass the world and at the same time keep out of it. It is a sincere ideal, but the depth of its sincerity is as great as the contradiction is irresolvable. This the ritualist must formulate as an unresolved dilemma, for in the end he must conclude that one should anyhow "run the race" also in the mundane, human way. The contradiction must be confronted head on, come what may. One cannot deny the ritualist his intellectual honesty.

## 2.7

But the contradiction shows its real bite when it comes to "the head of the sacrifice."<sup>108</sup> The theme of the "head" is the focus of a particularly rich web of mythological associations. In the *Ṛgveda* the head in expressions like the head of the universe, the head of the bull, or the head of the cow appears to indicate an invisible and mysterious place where the essence, especially of Agni and Soma, is hidden.<sup>109</sup> The head, then, is associated with or contains a treasure or a secret that is the essence of the universe. Everything depends on obtaining the head, and the gods have to contend for its possession. This notion is graphically expressed in the myths of Namuci, Dadhyañc, Makha,

and Viśvarūpa, often mentioned also in the ritual prose texts in explanation of “the head of the sacrifice.” They all have in common that their heads contain the priceless treasure. Without being unequivocally asuric—rather they seem to be intermediary figures between the two parties of devas and asuras, in a position to dispense their favors either way—they try to withhold the treasure, their head, from Indra and the devas. In schematic terms, there are two parties who must contend for the one priceless head.

The brāhmaṇa discussions on the details of the ritual system frequently invoke “the head of the sacrifice,” its being severed, the outflowing essence, and especially its restoration. In that connection various elements of the ritual system are regularly identified with “the head of the sacrifice.” Thus, for instance, its equivalence with the cereal cake that forms part of the animal sacrifice receives elaborate attention. The potsherds on which it is baked are the skull bones—both being called *kapāla*—and the cake itself the brain.<sup>110</sup> But do we have to take the expression just as a metaphor without a real substratum? It does not seem so. We may safely assume that “the head of the sacrifice” is none other than the severed head of the immolated victim. Mythology is clear on this point. Namuci, Dadhyañc, Makha, and Viśvarūpa are images of sacrifice, and they are all in one way or another beheaded. Decapitation appears to have been the regular method of immolation, and the gods did not do otherwise. “The head of the sacrifice was cut off; the sap (*rasa*) that gushed forth became the barren *vaśā* cow; the sacrifice of the *vaśā* cow after the soma sacrifice [gives] the sacrifice [back] its sapidity (*sarasatva*).”<sup>111</sup> Incidentally we see here again that one sacrifice calls for another in an unending chain, the cutting of the head having to be made up for in the severing of another head.<sup>112</sup> Against this background the identification of the cereal cake with the head falls into place. The cake is offered in the fire when the victim has been immolated. Through the cake the wound is covered, one is led to assume, that is, that the head is restored and the sacrifice made whole again.<sup>113</sup>

However, the ritual itself does not know decapitation as the method of immolation. In fact, cutting the victim’s head is ruled out and no offerings are made of the head.<sup>114</sup> This is even more striking, for cutting the victim’s head is well known outside the *śrauta* system of ritual as the normal method of immolation, as can be witnessed still throughout India. This practice even appears marginally in the *śrauta* texts, when we are told that “the head is handed over to the carpenter (*takṣan*),” because it was a carpenter who assisted Indra by cutting Viśvarūpa’s three heads.<sup>115</sup> But in the *śrauta* animal sacrifice immolation by beheading is totally unknown. Instead the animal is led away from the stake, the *yūpa*, on the place of sacrifice and brought to a shed north of it, the *śāmitra*, where it is “appeased” by keeping its mouth and nostrils shut. Even after the killing, when the victim is cut up, there is no rule for or even mention of the severing of the head. Origi-

nally suffocation may have been one of many ways of killing the sacrificial victim, but the striking point is the standardization of exactly this procedure against the general practice of cutting the head. The reason may well be the concern for preserving the wholeness of the victim—a concern we have already met in connection with giving back to the sacrifice the sap that has gushed forth. More generally, the standard *śrauta* procedure has, in a way, marginalized the actual killing that is no longer done at the stake, as it originally clearly was, but outside the ritual enclosure.<sup>116</sup> Equally it is not a typical blood sacrifice. There is no gushing forth of blood, nor is the blood used in any way.<sup>117</sup> Clearly the ritualists have remolded the animal sacrifice so as to eliminate the “inauspicious” awesomeness and excitement of blood and killing. The result—it would seem intentional—is an utterly flat, though intricate, sequence of acts and mantras, perfectly regulated and without ups or downs, which agrees with the ritualists’ aim of taming sacrifice.

So far we have seen that the *śrauta* immolation has been changed from the normal practice and that the choice of suffocating that leaves the animal intact and avoids spectacular bloodshed has most likely been a conscious one. But, however understandable this change in sacrificial practice appears to be, it created a curious aporia. I refer to the five heads—one human and four animal heads—that must be buried under the brick-built fire altar. The question is how these heads have to be procured. The obvious answer is: by way of sacrifice. And this is indeed the answer of the texts that prescribe a sacrifice for this purpose. Otherwise the heads would not be “propitiated” and therefore would be unfit for use in the sacrificial ritual.<sup>118</sup> Various answers are tried, the most interesting being the one offered by Baudhāyana.

This authority provides for a popular non-*śrauta* sacrificial festival, where indeed heads of the victims may be and usually are cut off. At a certain moment these heads are then transferred to the parallel *śrauta* sacrifice. Here we see two types of sacrifice—the popular festival and the rigidly standardized *śrauta* ritual—next to each other.<sup>119</sup> But how about the human head? Here Baudhāyana offers another solution. It should be the head of a vaiśya killed in battle and, interestingly, the horse head should be obtained in the same way. This unavoidably reminds us of the sacrificial contest in which one had to stake one’s head and consequently risked losing it. The circle would thus be closed. The head would indeed be obtained in sacrifice.<sup>120</sup> However, the ritual system has deliberately excluded such agonistic sacrificial violence. So the contest and its violence were “secularized” and relegated to the mundane order of things outside the ritual, leaving the sacrificer and his priests with the implausible and, all told, dishonorable proposition of scouring the fields for dead bodies of warriors and horses. But even if the requisite heads would be obtained from a non-*śrauta* festival and from bloody frays, the solution would still be far from perfect, for the



animals would not have been properly consecrated and “propitiated” according to the *śrauta* rules. Their heads would have to be introduced somewhat surreptitiously, as *corpora aliena*—a procedure that in fact constitutes a breach in the system. Although Baudhāyana comes nearest to a solution, it turns out that it is impossible to obtain the required heads in a proper way within the *śrauta* system of ritual.

One might be inclined to think that the only possibility would be to use artificial heads of clay or of gold. This is indeed recommended as an alternative by the texts. Clay would fit in with other ritual pottery, while gold, always associated with Agni, would not be out of place either. However, the use of such substitutes is exactly what is firmly rejected by the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.<sup>121</sup> The golden heads would not be *amṛta*, immortal, but *amṛta*, fake. As to the earthen substitutes it is reasoned that the animal victims have been removed (*utsanna*) and that the earth is the support (*pratiṣṭhā*) of what has been removed and therefore is retrieved from the earth. But the Śatapatha will have none of that.<sup>122</sup> In short, then, the Śatapatha does not want substitutes. It wants the real thing and so prefers a real sacrifice, either of five victims—including the human one<sup>123</sup>—or of only one victim that is equated with Prajāpati or with the other victims and neatly obviates the unpleasant business of human sacrifice.<sup>124</sup> But still the ritual does not allow one to take the heads. In the first alternative, therefore, four of the five victims are taken out of the ritual after their consecration for their beheading. The ritual is then continued and completed with one of the victims, the he-goat, whose head is cut only after the ritual’s completion.<sup>125</sup> The same goes for the one-victim alternative—equally a he-goat that is beheaded at the end of the ritual.<sup>126</sup> It is clear, however, that the ritual as such simply cannot deliver the heads, for the victims have to be taken out of the ritual for the purpose, or, alternatively, one must wait till the ritual is completed. Decapitation cannot be accommodated anymore. Whichever way one turns, one ends up in a stalemate. Here we come up against the same deep-seated contradiction we observed in the case of the chariot race. The sacrifice should run the race but he is not allowed to leave the ritual enclosure, that is, step out of the ritual system’s spatial confines. Similarly, ritualistically carrying around the fire in the *ukhā* cannot achieve the encompassment of the human, lived-in world, as it is expressly meant to do.

I hinted already at the riddle contained in the structure of the ritual, the urge to encompass the world from which it has purposely broken away. The riddle comes out in its most pregnant form in the aporia of the heads. Vādhūla appositely calls it the *paśuśīrṣavidyā*, the “knowledge of the victims’ heads,” a secret doctrine revealed to the king of the Kurus.<sup>127</sup> Significantly the learned scholars (*śrotṛīyas*) of the Kuru-Pañcālas cannot find out the solution “through the Vedas,” for, as we saw, they cannot give a satisfactory answer. The important point, however, is that the enigmatic aporia can be

seen to derive directly from the riddle of the original sacrifice, which is none other than the enigma of life and death. The enigma could not be solved, but it could be enacted in the uncertainty of the sacrificial contest in which life and death are played out in an ever-renewed *qui perd, gagne*.

The removal of the contest, however, meant that the riddle it enacted was replaced with the enigmatic contradiction of an insulated ritual that yet should encompass the world. The line that had shiftingly divided the sacrificial arena between the contending parties—schematically its axis pointing east, toward the heavenly world—had been pushed out to become the unbridgeable divide between the absolute monistic order of the ritual enclosure and the unpredictable dualistic order of the mundane world. The complementarity and interdependence of the contenders held together by the contest had been canceled, leaving the open gap of contradiction in its place. The enigmatic relationship of life and death enacted in the contest gave way to the mutual exclusion of irredeemably contradictory parts.

What the replacement of complementarity by contradiction means in actual practice is well illustrated by the *kṣatriya*, the lordly warrior and munificent patron who is the archetypal sacrificer but is nonetheless excluded from the basic twice-daily milk offering of the *agnihotra*, while the brahmin is forbidden to officiate for him.<sup>128</sup> The reason given for the exclusion is that the *kṣatriya* is given to inauspicious activities, eating improper food, killing, and plundering. Especially the last two objections are significant: they make him out to be the forceful contender. And exactly for this reason he must be excluded. Of course, this is most unsatisfactory, not least for the brahmin who stands to lose a munificent patron and protector. It is therefore ruled that a *kṣatriya* who faithfully performs the soma sacrifice is qualified to engage the services of the brahmin expert. But how should he be able to find the sixteen or even seventeen brahmin officiants required by the complicated soma ritual, when he is barred from engaging the services of even one single officiant for the simple *agnihotra*? Although there is, as we will see when we shall discuss the sacrificial meal, a ritualistic escape hatch, no direct answer is forthcoming. Instead there is, again, unresolved contradiction.

## 2.8

The contradiction built into ritualism should not cause us to dismiss the very real intellectual achievement of the ritualists. We saw that the obdurate aporia of ritualism continues the riddle of sacrifice in a different form. But the form is so different that we must characterize it as a breakthrough out of the endangered world of sacrifice. It confronts us with a new conception of universal order. Sacrifice had been the central institution for the periodic repartition of death and the goods of life in the widest—and also mate-

rial—sense. The order of the world hinged on the sacrificial contest. As such it was organically embedded in the social world, directing the dynamics of worldly tension and strife. Its being in a real sense the center of the world found its continuation in the notion of the order of ritualism as the cosmic order. But it is clear that ritualism propounds an entirely different kind of order than the sacrificial contest.

This becomes immediately clear when we consider the place of sacrifice. Understood through the *brāhmaṇas* it is a fighting ground where gods and asuras are forever slugging it out with each other, where Indra kills the *Vṛta* demon, where chariot fighters engage each other and the sacrificer may lose his life in hopes of going to heaven.<sup>129</sup> In short, as we already concluded, it is an arena. The ritualists' place of sacrifice on the other hand is perfectly peaceful. Both the turbulent arena and the peaceful *devayajana* share the artificial contrivance of being set apart from normal life on their own conventional playground. The play of sacrifice had its well-defined arena where the tension and strife of the social world were lifted out of their diffuse context and recast in the sacrificial contest. The enclosure devised by the ritualists, however, although equally a stage set apart from the world and ostensibly derived from the original arena, has fundamentally changed. Not only is the intricate sequence of acts and words regulated with exact precision, but by the same token the place of sacrifice has been separated from the surrounding social world in absolute fashion. There is no congregation. Although there may still be unspecified onlookers such as the *prasarpakas* or *sadasyas* who are admitted together with the officiants to enter the *sadas*, the hall on the extended place of sacrifice of the soma ritual, they receive scant mention and can only be considered an irrelevant remnant of the original active participants.<sup>130</sup> In fact, it would seem that they have collectively been turned into the seventeenth officiant in the soma liturgy, called *sadasya*, an "officialized" onlooker, very much like the *brahman* officiant to whom he is assigned as an assistant.<sup>131</sup> In brief, the ritualists' place of sacrifice is the closed and strictly individual universe that the single sacrificer creates for himself by completely submitting himself to the comprehensive and exhaustive *karmavidhāna*, the rules of the sacrificial ritual.

The "play," the game, of the arena obviously had its sacrosanct rules, but these rules were meant to keep uncertainty intact and the outcome open. They were, in other words, the "rules of the game." But when the opponent was excluded from active participation there was no game in any real sense anymore. The rules took over from the game. The "rules of the game" were turned into the "game of the rules." Here we come again on the riddle of ritualism that we have already seen in the impossibility of the ritual system to relate to the surrounding world from which it has broken away. In the same vein the "game of the rules" can be concisely characterized as a "clapping with one hand." The one hand has integrated the

other—as Prajāpati incorporated his opposite partner, Death. It claps its even, uninterrupted, and repetitious ritual rhythm.

This type of ritual that is essentially different from the “rules of the game” I propose to call “second-order” ritual. Its distinctive feature is that it is not dependent on the participation of others. It is not even dependent on the single sacrificer. It stands apart in sovereign independence, a law unto itself, irrespective of whether it is being practiced or not. As we have seen, it is left to the individual whether he decides to enter the separate and sovereign world of ritualism and submit to its absolute rule during the prescribed time. Ritualism—and this is the essential point—confronts us with a transcendent world. In the most literal sense it transcends the surrounding social world. While the ritual of the “first-order” derives directly from the transposition of worldly tension and strife to the sacrificial arena, the second-order ritual does not. In the first case the issue and the outcome—the redistribution of the “goods of life”—are clear and for all to see. The munificent sacrificial patron may, moreover, hope that reciprocity will richly reward him over time. The Vedic second-order ritualism, on the other hand, deals with the invisible (*adr̥ṣṭa*). The effect, the “fruit” it promises to the faithful sacrificer, comes about in an invisible way, and the promised effect itself is often said to be the invisible, namely, heaven.<sup>132</sup> The expert officiants who receive the *dakṣiṇā* wealth are not held to any reciprocity. The Mīmāṃsā rejects the view that the *dakṣiṇā* should be considered a gift that would consequently oblige the recipient. Instead it is viewed as a salary for services rendered.<sup>133</sup> When the service is rendered and the prescribed salary received there is no longer reciprocity or mutual obligation. The gift-giving circuit has been broken and the sacrificer has to go on disposing of his wealth in ritual without a visible or controllable way to recuperate. The ritual is supposed to produce its result automatically, be it cattle, health and long life, male progeny, or headmanship, but the way in which the effect should come about is hidden from our view. It is tempting to interpret the ritual as a purely magical operation to attain worldly ends, and the practitioners will often have vaunted it as such. But such claims rather look like a desperate means to bring the ritual back to the lived-in human world, by infusing it with magical intent. In that respect it is significant that the Mīmāṃsā does not discuss the relation of the sacrificial ritual to the mundane aims of obtaining cattle and the like but typically restricts itself to the “unseen” aim of heaven.<sup>134</sup> Irrespective of the uses and abuses to which it may be put, the second-order ritual is first and last transcendent. One cannot ask questions of the transcendent. One can only submit to its injunction (*codanā*) or choose not to do so.

On this point the term *śraddhā* is illustrative.<sup>135</sup> It has come to mean the unquestioning faith in the efficacy of the ritual. As such it has no social content. But the connection it still shows with the *dakṣiṇā* points in the

direction of an original social context of gift-giving and alliance. Thus the newly anointed king should send certain ceremonial gifts to his peers and rivals, the “counterkings” (*pratirājan*). By accepting his gifts the latter signify that they are his allies, or, as an older text puts it, “they place faith in him.”<sup>136</sup> In a comparable way the gods are said to have “made faith”—found “credit”—with their opponents, the mighty asuras.<sup>137</sup> We can observe the transition when the gifts sent to the *pratirājans* are prescribed as *dakṣiṇās* to be given to the officiating brahmins.<sup>138</sup> In the transcendent system of the individualized second-order ritual the concept of faith has been emptied of its social content.

This brings us to a further point. The transcendent nature of the second-order ritual forms a sharp contrast to the sacrality of the sacrificial contest. The latter, we know, deals directly with the enigmatically ambivalent relationship of life and death. It is in this enigmatic ambivalence that the sacred is situated. Herein too lies the danger of the sacred. It can further life, but it may equally spell death. The sacred, in other words, epitomizes the uncertainty of life and its processes of growth and decay as well as the unpredictable irruption of death. It is, therefore, intimately connected with the organic. The organicist “play” of sacrifice specifies the sacred that it draws out of diffuse normal life and sets it apart in a separate sacred space. There, in the sacred space, man plays god and manipulates the ambivalence of the enigmatic life-and-death nexus. But this also means that sacrifice and its sacred space are the center of the lived-in world and remain tied to it. Given the danger implied in the sacred, its concentration in sacrifice makes the arena also the center of potential catastrophe. It therefore desperately needs its rules and conventions that naturally follow from the necessity to channel the tensions it concentrates and heightens. Hence the parallelism of law and ritual. They have the same source. First-order ritual, then, is organically structured. It forms a consistent whole with the lived-in world and is meant to manipulate the unpredictable dynamism that is experienced as the sacred.

Second-order ritualism, however, changed all that. Having excluded the opposite partner and banished actual death from the ritual enclosure, ritualism has cut the links and ligatures that tied sacrifice to the organic world. In this way it was free—and, in fact, forced—to construe its own artificial elements that were lifted out of the organic first order, reduced and remolded into a set of precisely defined acts and mantras. It then ordered the limited number of ritualistically redefined elements in an indefinite variety of sequences according to clearly conceived rules of embedding and concatenation in the way we have discussed.<sup>139</sup> Such rules can also be observed in human and animal activity. The ritualists, however, took these rules out of their organic context and maximized them to build up their closed mechanistic system. In this sense one can speak of a “science of rit-

ual” that found its justification in the “equivalences.” The result was a fully reflected and closed system that, literally, transcends the organic first order and its sacrality.

## 2.9

The transcendent character of the *śrauta* system is fully elaborated by the Mīmāṃsā theorists, who hold the *śruti*, which is none other than the Vedic *corpus rituale*, to be permanent (*nitya*) and without a human author (*apauruṣeya*). This may seem contradictory in view of the *śruti*’s being clearly a conscious construct. It may indeed be taken as a further illustration of the enigma of ritualism. However, the theoretical stance that the *śruti* is *nitya* and *apauruṣeya* is in perfect keeping with its surpassing the organic and the sacred. Had it remained organically tied in with society and its sacrality—as sacrifice originally was—it would have undergone the impact of changing circumstances in the surrounding world. We would then expect to find the reflection of agrarian expansion, of towns, markets, and long-distance trade, as we do even in the older parts of the Buddhist canon. The horizon of the Veda remained that of a cattle-keeping warrior world. The Vedic second-order ritual was strangely impervious to the world around it. It was exactly its character as a mechanistic construct, purposely at right angles to lived-in reality, that enabled the endurance of Vedic ritualism in a changing world. In that sense we can understand the claim of its being “permanent” and “nonhuman.”

This brings us to the question of change. Change there certainly was, but it did not come about in the way one might expect, through the random processes of erosion or accretion. Once the breakthrough to the monistic conception of sacrificial ritual was achieved, change could be only in one direction. It meant that all ritual activity was broken up and reduced to the ever more refined code of liturgical abstractions. We have seen how the war and racing chariot was “abstracted away.” And even though the ritualists tried hard to reconnect their abstract liturgical “race” by the desperate expedient of doubling it with the pale semblance of a real one, there was no way back to lived-in reality. In the end, as we saw, the chariot could be eliminated, as happened in the *agnyādheya*. The only possible line of change was a progressive turning in of ritualism on itself.

It may be worthwhile to pause for a moment at the ritual’s self-restriction and turning in on itself. They are particularly noticeable in the spatial arrangements. It is clear that the original sacrificial arena as a sacred center was the starting point and terminus of large spatial circuits that will have interconnected similar centers where one engaged others, one’s peers and rivals, as one did in one’s own arena. We will later return to these circuits. For the moment it will be sufficient to mention the royal rituals that

amply illustrate such circuits. The most spectacular instance is, of course, the world-conquering round of the sacrificial horse that during the year before its immolation is set free to roam about followed by a sizable company of warriors. In connection with the brick-built fire altar there is a similar expedition to a loam pit where the clay for the bricks is to be obtained. On further investigation, however, it turns out to have originally been a raiding circuit.<sup>140</sup> The central idea appears to be the linking of the inner world of the center with the outer world, or of the settled community (*grāma*) with the wilderness outside (*aranya*). The same pattern applies to the chariot race, still fully presented in the *vājapeya* and conflated with a cattle raid—its proceeds are to be distributed as *dakṣiṇās*—in the *rājasūya*. Ritualism, however, strongly objects to leaving the ritual enclosure and therefore all but rules out even the chariot race, as we have seen. Inner and outer world are no longer to be organistically connected in a roundabout procession through space and time. Instead, everything is concentrated on the single ritual enclosure that is cut off from the outside world and thereby accentuates its transcendence.<sup>141</sup>

Once set on this course its inner logic drove the ritualists on. All connection to the world outside is ignored, if it is not outright denied. In Staal and Gardner's film recording of the fire altar ritual one sees that the clay for the fire pot (*ukhā*) and the bricks that would require an expedition outside the enclosure is, symbolically, already put ready within it, in a small token heap, so as to obviate the need for going outside.<sup>142</sup> As we have seen, the disembodied remnant of the chariot race should also be accommodated within the confines of the enclosure. In fact, there is no consideration of inner and outer space anymore, since the whole universe is, through the equivalences, subsumed in the ritual system and its enclosure. From here on the process of abstract reduction relentlessly continues. We have seen that the dimensions of space and time were, in principle, already fused with each other, the original circuit being a march through the full time cycle of the year as well as through space. The idea was eagerly taken up and elaborated by the ritualists especially in their speculations on the brick-built fire altar, which came to stand for both the spatial universe, represented as Prajāpati's or the cosmic man's body, and the full cycle of the year, equally equated with Prajāpati.<sup>143</sup> Space and time, then, are drawn together in the enclosure or, more specifically, in the single altar. But this equally means that the dynamics of the cycle have come to a static resting point. This is also well illustrated by the injunction that the extended enclosure, the *mahāvēdi*, of the animal sacrifice should have the measurements of the chariot. The western boundary should be equal to the axis; the middle line or "spine" (*prācī*, *prīṣṭhyā*) running from west to east equals the pole, while the eastern boundary has the length of the yoke.<sup>144</sup> The idea of the chariot, the epitome of the dynamic circuit, is still there, but there is no procession, no

movement anymore. It is an immobile projection on the ground of the enclosure. Similarly the ritual activity no longer shows any actual progress, building up to a climax and winding down. There only is a flat concatenation of similar interconnected acts whose beginning and end rejoin each other. Nor is there any visible, tangible result. Sacrifice, as will be discussed later, no longer even contains a festive meal.<sup>145</sup> The “fruit” is supposed to come about automatically, in an indirect and invisible—that is, transcendent—way. The Vedic second-order ritual aims at the absolute order of perfect stasis.

It is man by himself and alone, not the gods or any other supernatural agency, who must realize the absolute static order by unquestioningly submitting to the exacting rule of ritual. In itself the ritual is fail-safe, on condition that the rules are meticulously followed. But here the old uncertainty and ambivalence turn up again in a new garb. How is one to know that the intricate and exhaustive rules have been followed to the last dot? Can one be sure that no mistake has been unwillingly committed, which would unhinge the whole ritual construct with dire consequences for the sacrificer? Of course, one cannot. It is true that the ritual mistake is a technical matter that can be repaired by equally technical ritual means, the *prāyaścittis*, specified according to the nature of the mistake and forming a special rubric in the ritual manuals. But the texts do indeed evince an all but obsessive anxiety about the ritual mistake. It is interesting that the ritual mistake can be shown to derive from the violence and killing involved in the original sacrifice but now excluded from the enclosure.<sup>146</sup> The place that the disturbing uncertainty has and the ambivalence of the outcome that once were of the essence of sacrifice are now taken up by the obsessive concern for the ritual’s perfect static order.

With the contest gone—as we saw it has been demoted to the status of a ritual mistake—the full weight of the “evil” (*pāpman*) of sacrifice and, therefore, of the sacrificer came to rest on the immolation and the preparation of the oblation substance. The killing of the victim was removed from the ritual enclosure, but the pounding of the grain and the pressing of the soma—explicitly called a killing—are still performed within the enclosure. Although subdued by the ritual, sacrificial death is still residually present—as Mr̥tyu was after his defeat by Prajāpati. Sacrifice is for that reason often characterized as a “cruel” (*krūra*), blood-letting activity.<sup>147</sup> It requires expiation, even if it be through another bloody sacrifice, as the soma sacrifice is to be followed by the sacrifice of the *anūbandhyā* cow for Mitra and Varuṇa.<sup>148</sup> But the problem has now been immeasurably aggravated. The evil of the killing could no longer be passed on to the guest and rival, since there is no longer any other party. The immolatory killing had lost both its function of providing the festive meal and the expiation. Therefore, it would seem, concern about the killing and violence could not but become



obsessive, which led to what Hanns-Peter Schmidt has called the “ritual theory of *ahimsā*, non-violence.”<sup>149</sup> The point is that it now comes down exclusively to the single sacrificer left alone on the place of sacrifice and without the possibility of playing around the burden of death through the cycle of reciprocity. There are, of course, the ritualistic means of expiation, but here, as we saw, the anxiety about the ritual mistake takes over. And it is the individual, single sacrificer who carries the full brunt of the sacrificial burden that he can no longer transfer, not even to the expert officiant brahmins.

Seen in this perspective it is clear that the real center of the monistic second-order ritual is not even the ritual enclosure. It is the individual single sacrificer. He is systematically identified with Prajāpati who, in the form of the fire altar, fuses the dimensions of space and time and, monistically, is sacrifice, sacrificer, and victim all in one. In the last resort ritualism turns in on man. The ultimate enclosure is the sacrificer who knows the equivalences whereby the whole of the ritual—the three Vedas and the offerings—becomes his immortal body. This is the proud *ātmayājīn*, the one who through his knowledge has drawn all equivalences into himself and thereby has won the sovereign independence of the transcendent.<sup>150</sup> The *devayājīn*, on the other hand, whose ritual activity is directed at the gods, is an inferior who brings his tribute to a superior. Similarly, immortality can be reached either through the ritual (*karma*) or through knowledge (*vidyā*).<sup>151</sup> External sacrifice, then, is no longer necessary. The knowledge by itself suffices. Here we reach the point where the extrasocial individualism of the ritualistic endeavor attains its ultimate consequence and ritualism gives way to internalization.

At this point a new development sets in that leads straight to the renouncer, the *saṃnyāsīn* who leaves the world no longer temporarily, as the *śrauta* sacrificer does, but permanently to take up a transcendent stance.<sup>152</sup> He is the ultimate sacrificer. Like Prajāpati, the epitome of classical ritualism, he assimilates Death. For as we saw, “Death becomes his self.”<sup>153</sup> The sacrificial contest is now with the “enemy within,” one’s own self. It is fought and won not through blood sacrifice or ritual but through the knowledge of the final equivalence, where the individual *ātman* and the cosmic *brahman* implode into one static and dimensionless point.

Finally the unruly ghost of sacrifice had been laid to rest by ritual. The world of sacrifice was a broken world. It was riven by conflict that found its climax in the privileged sacrality of the sacrificial contest. Tenuously held together by the interdependence of the contending parties, it was always on the brink of collapse. By their attack on the contest the ritualists dissolved the pivotal dynamics of the sacrificial cycle of violence. The cycle fell apart. The already-broken world of sacrifice definitively collapsed never to recover again. Even though blood sacrifices continue to this day on a local or even

regional level throughout the Hindu world, they conspicuously lack the ultimate "canonical" legitimacy that is the exclusive property of the Vedic *śruti*.<sup>154</sup> They belong to the organicist sacral order. The ritualism of the Veda, on the other hand, dissolved the sacrality of sacrifice and remolded the dismembered pieces of the sacrificial cycle into the fully reflected mechanistic system of their transcendent ritual. Transcendence cast sacrality into the shade.

## 2.10

To conclude, it may be worthwhile to throw a brief glance at other, non-Indian, scriptural traditions. In the first place the Iranian fire cult, closely related to the Vedic liturgy, invites comparison. The Parsi cult does not know animal sacrifice. Indeed, no oblation is made in the fire, not even of vegetal offerings or of the *haoma* beverage (the Vedic soma). The *haoma* is only carried round the fire and then drunk by the priest.<sup>155</sup> Yet there are telling liturgical features that remind one of animal sacrifice. Thus the more important Parsi cult centers keep a consecrated white bull, but in the course of worship only its hair is used. In straining the *haoma* also some hair is brought to but not offered in the fire. As J. J. Modi tells us, "No animal is killed, only some hair of an ox—the consecrated white bull—is placed in a small vessel and shown, together with other things, to the fire," adding significantly, "but formerly they used a piece of meat besides."<sup>156</sup>

Indeed, animal sacrifice appears until recently to have been part of the cult among the Parsis in India, while their relatives in Iran still practice it.<sup>157</sup> Whether the prophet himself tolerated or even practiced sacrifice is still a question open to debate, although scholarly opinion now seems to lean to the view that he did. The strident denunciations that can be quoted in support of Zarathustra's rejection of sacrifice may well have been directed against certain practices associated with or forming the context of sacrifice and not against sacrifice as such.<sup>158</sup> In this connection one may think of the *aēšma*, the wrath or frenzy characterizing the prophet's opponents and associated by Swedish scholars with the *Männerbund* and its cultic practices.<sup>159</sup> In that case the Zoroastrian reform would have similar origins as Vedic ritualism, and Zarathustra would not have sought to rule out sacrifice. What was ruled out was the sacred frenzy of the warrior. The aim was strict control over sacrifice, not its total rejection. On the contrary, reformed and strictly regulated, the sacrificial fire cult was viewed as the prefiguration of the eschatological renewal.<sup>160</sup> The fury of the contest, on the other hand, was taken out of the cult and elevated to the ongoing cosmic fight of good and evil.

It would seem, then, that the full scenario of sacrifice was originally part of the liturgy. There is, however, an interesting contrast with Vedic

ritualism. The Zoroastrian cult, at least in Iran, unabashedly maintained the killing by slitting the throat, the blood being collected and drunk. Also the festive sacrificial meal (*cāshmi*), ritualized as a celebration of perfect amity, remained an integral part of the liturgy.<sup>161</sup> The burnt oblation, however, came to be restricted to the fat of the animal victim—in fact, a spiritualized act of tending the fire as distinct from the oblation of meat and other substances. Vedic ritualism, by contrast, put the full weight of the proceedings on the oblation abandoned to destruction in the fire, while the immolation was marginalized and the sacrificial meal dismantled and relegated outside the bounds of the ritual. India, one might say, maximized the burnt oblation at the expense of the two other main elements of sacrifice; Iran on the other hand reduced and finally gave up the burnt oblation while giving full rein to immolation and meal.<sup>162</sup> Both, however, show their affinity in the importance they attach to the fire, albeit in opposite ways—the one by the emphasis on the fire as the recipient of the oblation, the other by freeing the fire from this burden and thereby making it absolute. More important, however, both liturgical traditions broke away from the catastrophic world of sacrifice, creating a rift between the absolute order of ritualism and the uncertain order of sacrifice that found its highest, most intense expression in the contest for life and death. The latter, well embedded in society, continued to be practiced—but it had definitively lost its ultimate value and legitimating power under the attack of transcendent ritualism that promised an ultramundane and incontrovertible order.

It is not only in ancient India and Iran that the world of sacrifice came under severe attack. Even a tentative look at two entirely different scriptural traditions, the Chinese and the Judeo-Christian, shows that the tense and potentially catastrophic nature of sacrifice presented serious problems there too. It is especially in the sacrificial contest that the actual threat of sacrifice is most inescapable, but it may be conceded that it comes out with exceptional force and directness only in the ancient Indian case. The *brāhmaṇa* expositions tirelessly refer to it. The *brāhmaṇa* authors, it would seem, remain riveted to a world they have overcome but that continues to surround them in everyday life. But the contest motif does not seem to have been absent elsewhere. As for the Old Testament, there is the sacrificial contest of Cain and Abel that ends in the latter's death, and we may also think of the remarkable episode of the rivalry of the prophet Elijah and the Baal priests that recalls the anxious question of the older *brāhmaṇas*, "To whose sacrifice will the gods come, to whose not?"

In China, it is true, there are no clear indications of contest but the disturbing nature of local sacrificial cults of malevolent demons or spirits of the dead that may attract a large and riot-prone following and upset the order of society is clearly evinced. And so we find a persistent prevention against "excessive cults" (*yin-ssu*).<sup>163</sup> In other words, sacrifice seems to have

been viewed as a “law-and-order” problem. At any rate, its practice was restricted by law to the nobility, while the full-scale cosmic sacrifice was the exclusive privilege of the ruler. The Taoist liturgy even bans sacrifice. The reservation of the sacrificial cult reminds one of the Indian legend of King Vena, who was considered abominable exactly because he reserved all sacrifice for himself and for good measure was therefore immolated himself by the enraged seers.<sup>164</sup> Indeed, the Vedic tradition shows the reverse of the Chinese attitude. The ancient Indian ritualists subdued sacrifice but then threw the practice open to all but the śūdras who were denied access to Veda.<sup>165</sup> As we have seen, under the rule of ritual the king is in no way different from a commoner.

In the early Christian tradition the problem presented by sacrifice superficially seems to be the opposite. In a way sacrifice had to be all but reinvented. Although sacrificial cults were a common feature of the surrounding Hellenistic world, animal sacrifice was already for some time in decline in Jewish life.<sup>166</sup> And after the second destruction of the temple it disappeared altogether. More important than the actual practice, which was mainly concentrated at the temple in Jerusalem, was the reading and studying of sacrificial texts—which reminds us of the late Vedic stress on knowledge as against the actual ritual performance.<sup>167</sup> But the Christian view of the Crucifixion as a sacrifice stressed its uniqueness as a once-and-for-all historical event that would not bear repetition or else would be deprived of its significance as the ultimate sacrifice of atonement. And although there was a tendency in the eastern churches to view the Eucharist as indeed a new immolation, there was no renewal of a real sacrificial cult. The point of overriding importance was the celebration not of sacrifice as such but of the memory of the ultimate redeeming sacrifice. So here too sacrifice was subdued and the idea kept within the strict bounds of a fully reflective second-order ritual.

In all these cases we notice that sacrifice once was a central or rather *the* central institution. But equally we notice that sacrifice is felt to be too much of a burden. It could and did fulfill a central function, if at the price of the threat of recurrent crisis and collapse. Ancient India and Iran, as well as China, Judaism, and nascent Christianity, subdued sacrifice each in its own way. But in each case it was ritualistic reflection that broke the disturbing spell of sacrifice. Ritualism, however, not only broke the spell and relegated sacrifice to strictly defined bounds. Through its reflective nature it also set off a chain reaction of a new vision of the world and of man’s place in it.

## *The Cult of the Fire*

### 3.1

WE HAVE ALREADY DISCUSSED the intimate connections of sacrifice with the cult of the fire. No less than in the Iranian case, Vedic ritual is essentially the cult of the fire. Given the fire's obvious importance to the life of the household it stands to reason that it should have pride of place in the domestic or *gr̥hya* ritual—and so it has. Installed at the time of marriage it defines the household as a unit and accompanies it until the demise of the *paterfamilias* when it renders its last service at his cremation and a new phase starts with the next generation, equally marked by kindling and maintaining the fire. But the pivotal role of the fire is even more conspicuous in the sacrificial *śrauta* ritual. Still apart from the burnt offerings the care of the fire—readying the hearths, making fire or taking it from elsewhere, distributing it over the hearths, elaborately fueling it, and verbally worshipping it—forms the thread that holds the sacrificial proceedings together. The *śrauta* ritual turns on the fire. Even more than in the case of ancient Greece, it can be said of the Vedic *śrauta* ritual that “sacrifices without fire are rare, conscious exceptions, and conversely there is rarely a fire without sacrifice.”<sup>1</sup>

The opposite element of water is no less important in the cult as it is in daily life. In the ritual enclosure the “waters carried forward” (*pranītāḥ*) stand next to the eastern, oblatinal fire, immediately to the north of it. And one only needs to think of the frequent consecratory baths to be reminded of the important role of the aquatic element in Vedic ritual—the *apsudīkṣā* or “consecration in the waters” of the prospective soma sacrificer, the *avabhṛtha* or final “carrying-off” bath at the end of the soma ritual, and the *abhiṣeka* or consecratory shower undergone by the sacrificer at the height of *śrauta* sacrifices belonging to the category called *sava*. Mythological notions, moreover, emphasize the intimate relationship of the aquatic and the igneic elements.<sup>2</sup> But notwithstanding the importance attached to the aquatic element—or rather to the opposition and complementarity of the two elements—there is no doubt that the continuous changes the fire

undergoes, the fickleness of its flame, and the attention it therefore requires make it by far the more spectacular and demanding cult object. Above all, while water is the primary requirement of life and indispensable in the cult, it is only the fire that can be generated and controlled by man.

The ritualistic reform did not impair the fire's overall importance. On the contrary, by elaborating the offering in the fire, in preference to other ways of making the oblation, and by making it the central feature of the ritual at the expense of the other elements—immolation and, especially, the festive meal—Vedic ritualism could not but stress the fire's pivotal role. While the gods, prolonging a tenuous life in the mantras, became mere names, Agni remained the one and only god who was directly and visibly present in the fire on the place of sacrifice. Indeed, as far as the ritual is concerned Agni may well be viewed as the only god. Or, as the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa tells us, “among both, gods and asuras, Agni alone was immortal,” and it was through Agni that they gained immortality.<sup>3</sup>

Yet it is not the burnt oblation as such that gave the fire its heightened prominence. In fact, the fire's prominence does not necessarily depend on the burnt oblation. Our discussion of the Iranian variant showed that the loss of the burnt oblation (apart from tending the fire with animal fat) gave even greater prominence to the fire than it had as the recipient of the offerings.<sup>4</sup> Deprived of its destructive function the fire's full potential as the cultic center in a second-order liturgy could be deployed. In this sense the Iranian development went far beyond the related Vedic ritual. It showed that, however intimate the link between fire and sacrifice, it is not a necessary one. Vedic ritual, however, maximized this link to the point at which the cult of the fire all but disappeared when the burnt oblation was replaced by other forms of worship that disregarded immolation and destruction in favor of the element of food and gift. The latter is the case of the *pūjā*—essentially the guest reception and the festive meal offered to the deity and consumed by the worshipers—or the offering in the “internal fires” of the vital breaths, the *prāṇas*, which likewise comes down to a ceremonial, albeit solitary, meal. In the Iranian case on the other hand, although the full sacrificial scenario was kept up until at least the end of the Sasanian period,<sup>5</sup> the Zoroastrian reform—irrespective of the much-debated question of whether Zarathustra had meant to ban sacrifice altogether<sup>6</sup>—had opened the way to a verbal liturgy that could maintain the fire in its center and make its cult absolute precisely because the fire had been freed from its destructive function.

### 3.2

The comparison with the Iranian fire cult also brings out another even more important contrast. We have seen that the Vedic *śrauta* ritual was pur-

posely individualized and set apart from society. It was even cut loose from the domestic cult with the result of a rigorous formal divide between the ritual pertaining to the household (*gr̥hya*) and *śrauta* ritual. As we shall discuss in more detail further on, the fire used in the sacrificial *śrauta* ritual is strictly separate from the fire of the domestic hearth. The ritualists have been at pains to mark the divide as sharply as possible; and although the primary *śrauta* fire from which the other fires in the ritual enclosure are derived is called *gārhapatya*, “householder’s fire,” it is not directly taken from the domestic hearth but separately produced with the help of the fire drill.

The Iranian fire cult, by contrast, went the other way. For all the intricate rules and procedures to ensure the purity of the cultic fire there is no issue of a sharp divide between the domestic and the cultic fire. Instead we find a three-tiered ranking of fires, the third and lowest rank being occupied by the ordinary fire of the household that can be set up, even without being ritually purified, in a fire temple of corresponding rank.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting here that Vedic ritual equally contains a grouping of three or five cult fires—the pentad of the fires being, in another way, also known in Iran.<sup>8</sup> The point is that in contradistinction to Vedic India the hierarchic organization of the fires was strongly embedded in the social, political, and jural order of the Sasanian empire, with antecedents going back to Achaemenid times. The lesser fires are the “retainers” of the fire of the highest rank, the *Ātash Bahrām*, “the Victorious King of Fires,” the central and most important being the cult fire of the Sasanian royal house.<sup>9</sup> In the same way the Parsis venerate the *Irānshāh*, their premier fire, presumably so called, as Mary Boyce suggests, because this particular *Ātash Bahrām* was consecrated in place of the Sasanian royal fire that must have been extinguished by the conquering Arabs.<sup>10</sup> It is, in other words, the symbolic head of a stateless nation in diaspora. The ranking of fires and the affiliation of lesser fires to one of a higher degree demonstrate the sociopolitical importance of the Iranian fire cult. When we further think of the sanctuaries where the fires were “enthroned” and liberally endowed so as to be able to continue permanently burning, we come to see a widely spread network of fire temples that had a sphere of influence far exceeding the purely religious. Controlled, directly or indirectly, by the state and having its acme in the royal foundations, the hierarchic network of the fire cult formed the core of the empire in more than a symbolic sense.<sup>11</sup>

The Indian and the Iranian fire cults, then, have taken diverging, even opposing, paths. But their very contrast shows their common source. Each has, in its own way, selectively reworked and developed the common heritage, the one stressing the communal aspect, the other individualizing the fire to the point of desocializing it; but the common denominator of both developments is restrictive regulation. Against this background we shall

now have to look in more detail into the Vedic development that led to the rigorous separation of domestic and sacrificial fire and finally to the latter's near disappearance—a development that is the more striking for the marked contrast to the closely related Iranian fire cult.

The communal option was clearly available to the Vedic ritualists. The fire's frequent epithet *vaiśvānara*, "common to all men," speaks for itself. Also the hierarchic aspect of the ruler vis-à-vis the people is represented by Agni Vaiśvānara. This is made clear by a vegetal offering of two cakes, one baked on twelve potsherds for Agni Vaiśvānara and one on seven potsherds for the Maruts, commonly viewed as the divine *viśah*, the heavenly clans or people.<sup>12</sup> To make the point of rulership even more obvious the two cakes are baked separately, the one for Agni Vaiśvānara on the forward fire, the *āhavanīya*, and the Marut cake on the *gārhapatya* at the back of the enclosure. Moreover, the Marut cake is baked later, when the *āhavanīya* is already being prepared to receive the oblations by being fueled and worshiped. This would seem to suggest the people attending to the worship of the "royal" fire, which is there for "all men." We do indeed meet with a fully elaborated version of such a scenario in the royal consecration (*rājasūya*). The royal sacrificer takes his fire to each of his twelve chief retainers or "jewel holders" (*ratnin*) in turn. At the place of the *ratnin* a sacrifice (*īṣṭi*) is performed for which the host has to provide the materials. The levying of sacrificial tribute is then followed by another sacrifice at the royal sacrificer's central enclosure.<sup>13</sup> In this way, we are told, the royal sacrificer wins the *ratnin*'s enduring fealty.<sup>14</sup> Without difficulty we can discern here, in these *ratnin* offerings, an incipient pattern of hierarchically affiliated fireplaces forming a basic network of the realm.

Such a communal pattern of affiliation bringing together the individual households and the fireplaces that mark them is, of course, far from surprising. It is of a piece with the fire's social functions and with the cooperation needed in maintaining or obtaining the fire. In ancient India, these social or communal potentialities were certainly not ignored. In this connection we should mention the *sabhya* fire hearth in the assembly hall (*sabhā*). However, it is significant that the use of this ostensibly communal fire remains vague. In the *śrauta* ritual it emerges in high profile only once—together with its usual companion, the *āvasathya*, literally, "residence fire" (thus, it is domestic), but its function in the *śrauta* ritual is unclear—namely, in the ritual of establishing the sacrificial fires (*agnyādheya*). But what the actual use of this fire in the *sabhā* should be is left in the dark. Apparently a *sabhā* should, as a matter of course, have a fire, but we are not told for what purpose. Once it has been solemnly established it is as good as forgotten. We will have occasion to come back to the questions raised by the *sabhya* fire as well as the other fires and their distribution. But at this point it may suffice to conclude that the various openings toward a consistent communal



pattern such as was developed in Iran were left scattered and unexploited. The *sabhya* fire simply remains an individual sacrificer's exclusive property without any communal function. It does not even appear to serve a sacrificial purpose. Similarly the Vaiśvānara cake offering we briefly discussed is just that, a standard *īṣṭi* that, notwithstanding a variant point of procedure, remains enclosed in the individualized *śrauta* system. No real function is assigned to Agni Vaiśvānara, the fire "common to all men," in the community or its political affairs. Even the *ratnin* offerings, clearly suggestive of social and political meaning, remain within the standard ritualistic mold. And the fire carried around to the *ratnins*' places in what looks like a tribute-levying circuit is not given any special profile or stature. On the contrary, the Śatapatha is even concerned lest the *ratnin* offerings be all too social or communal: the rice mess for Soma and Rudra at the end of the series of offerings is said to purify the royal sacrificer from the taint of having all manner of people, including *śūdras*, associated with his sacrifice in the course of the *ratnin* circuit.<sup>15</sup>

After what we have seen in the previous chapter of the course taken by Vedic ritualism it cannot come as a surprise that the sacrificial fire was divested of its societal potential and in fact withdrawn from social life. As the *śrauta* ritual was desocialized, so was the cult of the sacrificial fire. The surprise is the stark contrast to the Iranian fire cult. The question is how the Vedic ritualists attempted to square the circle of devising a sacrificial fire, separate from society while at the same time linking it with its counterpart in society, the domestic or *grhya* fire. We already mentioned the strict separation of the domestic fire from the sacrificial fire of the *śrauta* ritual. The problem confronting the ritualists, however, was not just to separate the two but to devise the ritual procedure for arriving from the one, the *grhya* fire, at the other, its *śrauta* counterpart. The answer was the ritual of setting up the sacrificial fires, the *agnyādheya* or *ādihāna*. This ritual was clearly meant to be the first step of the *cursus honorum* of the *śrauta* sacrificer. Without the proper *śrauta* fire there is no *śrauta* sacrifice. At the same time, the *agnyādheya* epitomizes the transformation of the Vedic fire cult. For both reasons—its central place in the ritual system and what it tells us about the transformation involved—we will have to go into this ritual in some detail. The Iranian fire cult, although it has no directly corresponding ritual, provides a contrastive background for our discussion of the *agnyādheya*.

### 3.3

Before discussing its various aspects a brief outline of the proceedings of setting up the *śrauta* fires is in order.<sup>16</sup> As may be expected the ritual consists of a *grhya* and a *śrauta* phase. In the first phase the domestic fire holds center stage. The main feature of the first phase is a solemn meal of a rice

mess (*odana*) prepared on a fire taken from the domestic hearth. The second and decisive phase is ushered in by drilling a new fire by means of two wooden sticks (*arani*). The fire is then divided over the five hearths that form the *vihāra*, the spatial distribution of the fires, that marks the place of sacrifice—in the first place the *gārhapatya*, the “householder’s fire” used in preparing the sacrificial viands at the western end, the oblatinal hearth or *āhavanīya* to the east, and the *dakṣiṇāgni* or southern fire used for cooking the food (*anvāhārya*, “what is to be served after” the main offering) presented as a gift to the officiating brahmins and therefore also known as *anvāhāryapacana*. Finally, rounding out the number five, there are the *sabhya* or assembly fire and the *āvasathya* or “residence fire” situated east of the *āhavanīya*. Although the latter two fires have practically no function in the *śrauta* ritual at large, they are here, in the *agnyādheya*, associated with the interesting rite of gambling for the parts of a cow (which is in actual practice replaced by a rice mess). Incidentally, the clearly communal function of the fire in this latter rite can explain why we hear so little about the *sabhya* and *āvasathya* in the *śrauta* ritual.

The first phase—on the eve of the actual *ādihāna*—starts with taking fire from the domestic hearth. Alternatively the whole of the domestic fire can be taken up, implying a complete removal of the household.<sup>17</sup> In both cases the fire taken from the domestic hearth is installed in a place immediately to the west of the place of sacrifice-to-be, where later the *śrauta* fires will be installed. On this still purely domestic fire an *odana* or rice mess—in this case called *brahmaudana*—is cooked that is served with a liberal sprinkling of ghee to four brahmins. Although such *odanas* occur elsewhere in the *śrauta* ritual, they strictly belong to the *grhya* sphere.<sup>18</sup> Thus at the beginning and at the end of the horse sacrifice they are peripheral to the *śrauta* ritual proper.<sup>19</sup> The *odana* is terminologically set apart from its *śrauta* counterpart, the *caru*, equally a rice mess but cooked on a proper *śrauta* fire and destined for offerings in the fire. Generally, preparing and offering food to brahmins is considered by the ritualists to be typical of the domestic ritual. The ceremonial feeding of brahmins, even of the brahmin officiants (*ṛtvij*) in a *śrauta* sacrifice, is not part of its ritual, and the eating of the sacrificial food, as well as of the food specially prepared for them (*anvāhārya*), takes place outside the ritual enclosure and after the conclusion of the ritual.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the invocation of *Iḍā* and the eating of the so-called *iḍā* portions—the last remnant of the sacrificial meal—are considered by the ritualists as “what of the sacrifice is torn apart” (*vyasta*).<sup>21</sup> So the meal is generally ruled out, or if it cannot be avoided, as in the case of the *iḍā*, it is a disturbing element in the *śrauta* order and must be remedied by a mantra invoking *Brhaspati*: “May he put together the broken sacrifice.” It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* appears to argue against the *brahmaudana* as an integral part of setting up the *śrauta* fires.<sup>22</sup>

We will later come to the Satapatha's objections, but first our attention is required by a curious rite connected with the *brahmaudana*.

This rite concerns three pieces of *aśvattha* wood that are stirred in the remainder of the ghee and the rice mess left in the vessel. Thus smeared with the remainder, the three pieces of wood are put in the *brāhmaudanika* fire, with a mantra containing the word *ghṛta*, ghee, uttered as each piece is added. This rite can easily suggest procreation. The *brāhmaṇa* texts of the Black Yajurveda accordingly explain it by referring to a myth of the goddess Aditi who became pregnant of the *Āditya* gods by eating the remainder of the *odana* she had cooked and served up wishing for progeny.<sup>23</sup> In this way the rite of the three fuel sticks is taken to mean that the *brāhmaudanika* fire is made pregnant with the *śrauta* fire. Thus the ghee is said to be the semen and the sticks the bones. "By using fuel sticks smeared with ghee he places the bones in the semen."<sup>24</sup> The suggestion of a period of pregnancy is given further effect when an interval of a year or a symbolically equivalent period is prescribed before the actual setting up of the *śrauta* fires. "In a year's time embryos are born full-grown; he installs [the fire] when it is full-grown."<sup>25</sup> However, the symbolism is not as conclusive as it seems to be. The equation of the fire's gestation with Aditi's pregnancy and the birth of the *Ādityas* seems rather forced.

The motif of Aditi's *odana* would seem to have arisen from her association with *Idā*, the divine cow who stands for the sacrificial meal. Aditi herself is also represented as a cow. When we further observe that an *odana* meal replaces the cow that is the prize in the *agnyādheya*'s gambling scene, Aditi's association with the *brahmaudana* seems natural enough.<sup>26</sup> Also the association of Aditi with the fire is clearly available. As the earth goddess she is intimately linked with the *vedi*, the shallow dugout covered with a layer of grass on which the offerings are placed. The *vedi*, arranged in the schematic shape of a woman with broad hips and narrow shoulders, half encloses the *āhavanīya* hearth between its "shoulders" and the *gārhapatyā* between the "hips."<sup>27</sup> This graphically illustrates Agni's epithet *vediśad*, sitting at or on the *vedi*, as well as the use of the word (*uttara*)-*vedi* for the *āhavanīya* mound. There is then a rich network of associations linking Aditi, the cow and earth goddess, with the nurturing *odana* and with the fire.

In the Atharvaveda we do indeed find these elements clustered in a consistent pattern. "O Agni, be born; Aditi here, seeking support, cooks a *brahmaudana* in her desire for sons; the seven seers, makers of beings, should churn thee together with offspring."<sup>28</sup> The related Kausika Sūtra appropriately applies this and the three following verses to the churning of the fire for cooking an *odana*, the central feature of the Atharvavedic *savayajñas*.<sup>29</sup> Although Kausika's *odana* ritual does not know the rite with the ghee-soaked fuel logs this practice may have originated with the Artharvans. Smearing various objects with the remainder of the ghee is occasion-

ally prescribed in the *grhya* and *śrauta* ritual of the other schools, but with Kauśika it is a regularly recurring practice.<sup>30</sup> Borrowing from the Atharvanic tradition, albeit with modified application and meaning, does not seem unlikely.

However, taking up the theme of Aditi and her *odana* the Yajurveda ritualists left telling traces of its reworking. In itself the theme, dealing as it does with churning and installing the domestic *odana* cooking fire, seems ideally suited to the purpose of the *agnyādhāna*—the transition from domestic fire to *śrauta* cult fire. But to that end the Yajurveda ritualists had to work the Aditi theme round. Instead of the fire being churned to cook Aditi's *odana*, the *brahmaudana* is cooked to conjure up the birth of the *śrauta* fire. Obviously a rice mess—whatever it mythically did for Aditi—cannot produce fire. Significantly the ritualists did not even try to establish a direct link between the goddess giving birth to the Ādityas on the one hand and the production of fire on the other. They only hint at a parallelism, based on the productiveness of the nurturing *odana* per se, of Aditi's pregnancy and the new fire's gestation period. Mythologically this is good enough. What the ritualists needed, however, was a tangible connection between the domestic rice mess and the *śrauta* fire. This they found in the ghee-smeared fuel sticks. In itself putting wood in a newly produced fire—the *odana* cooking fire in the Atharvaveda version—is, of course, a self-evident act. To smear the fuel with ghee or, as in the old Zoroastrian practice, with animal fat is no more than practical.<sup>31</sup> Thus the wood put on the newly installed *śrauta* fires is regularly smeared with ghee without the smearing being made into a separate ritual act.<sup>32</sup> In the case of the *brāhmaudanika* fire, however, the fueling was lifted out of its normal context and turned into a pivotal and highly profiled rite in order to connect the domestic with the cultic fire to be produced.

Yet the procreative meaning assigned to the act of fueling was not as self-explanatory as it might seem. We meet also with an other explanation. As the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā tells it, the Ādityas, when born, jealously barred the way to heaven, pushing back those coming after them, especially the human sacrificer.<sup>33</sup> The smeared fuel sticks should therefore serve to announce properly the sacrificer's *agnyādhēya* to the Ādityas. The remnants of the *odana* sticking to the fuel sticks are said to be their share, and by offering it to them the sacrificer gains access to their heavenly world. In other words, the fuel sticks are made out to be an offering to the Ādityas, thus providing for a rather different type of linkage between Aditi's *odana* and the installation of the *śrauta* fire. However, after this astutely contrived explanation our text shifts inconsistently to the yearlong pregnancy of the fire, but the fuel sticks and the *odana* remnant have no place in it. Their procreative purpose drops out of sight, and the whole symbolic argument comes to look rather shaky.

But the final blow to the fire-producing symbolism of *odana* and fuel sticks is in the sequel. After keeping the *brāhmaudanika* fire going during the night one should early the next morning warm the fire drill—the two *araṇis*—over it. This is a widespread procedure for moving the fire, called *niṣṭapana*, “warming.” In this way the fire is made to “mount” the fire drill—that is, symbolically transferred to the drill. Then, when the sun rises, the new fire is churned from the *araṇis* and placed on the *gārhapatya* hearth nearby, to the east of the *brāhmaudanika* hearth. At this point the actual *śrauta* phase of the *agnyādheya* begins. The *brāhmaudanika* fire is then either given up or it is reemployed, in accordance with its original function, as the southern or cooking fire (*dakṣiṇāgni*, *anvāhāryapacana*) for the preparing of the food “served afterward” (*anvāhārya*) to the brahmin officiants—in fact a sort of *odana* presented and divided but not yet eaten during the ritual. What calls for our attention is not so much the elaborate churning of the primary *śrauta* fire and the explicit sexual associations of this rite but the fact that the *brāhmaudanika* fire has no real part in obtaining the new fire, apart from its imaginary transfer to the *araṇis*. There is in fact no tangible connection between the two fires.

Even from the symbolic and mythic point of view there is a complete break. The theme of impregnation and pregnancy artfully contrived by means of Aditi’s mythic *odana* and the fuel sticks is abruptly broken off and replaced by another myth, that of Purūravas and the nymph Urvaśī—represented by the two *araṇis* that are addressed with these names—who by their sexual union instantly generate the fire as their son Āyu.<sup>34</sup> No connection between the two themes is even vaguely suggested. In succinct terms, there is a truncated pregnancy without birth and a birth without pregnancy. That the fire’s “mounting” the fire drill is viewed in sexual terms as a bull impregnating a cow does nothing to fill the gap but only adds to the truncated and confused imagery.<sup>35</sup> Had the ritualists wanted to give the meaning they assigned to the *brahmaudana* its full weight, they could have followed the usual procedure of taking a burning piece of wood from the *brāhmaudanika* fire to kindle the *gārhapatya* fire. Or, failing that, they might have taken advantage of the *uttapanīya* or *ambariṣa* procedure—heating a potsherd or a pan to ignite easily combustible material put in it. As it is, they had resort to the minimal method of *niṣṭapana*, imaginarily having the *brāhmaudanika* “mount” the fire drill. Apparently the ritualists intended to create a divide, as sharp as possible, between the two fires, while at the same time suggesting a symbolic filiation. It is a tour de force typical of the ritualist’s art in handling ambivalence and as such unmistakably a contrivance.

Here we should come back to the objections raised by the Śatapatha against the *brahmaudana* and the fuel sticks, both of which it considers to be at least superfluous.<sup>36</sup> In the first place it is interesting that it has no use

for the Aditi theme in explaining the *brahmaudana*.<sup>37</sup> It only draws on the general nurturing capacity of the rice mess by stating that it is meant to strengthen the meters (which are essential to the liturgy). But then the Śatapatha rejects this argument. The purpose, we are told, is better served by the general hospitality extended to brahmins (the liturgical specialists) whether they are engaged as priestly experts or not—after all, they will be more in need of strengthening nurture than the abstract meters. So there is no need for the *brahmaudana* as a specific separate rite. As to the fuel sticks—here only smeared with ghee, not with *odana* remnants—the Śatapatha mentions the view that the ghee-soaked sticks of *aśvattha* wood should serve to obtain the *śamīgarbha*, that is, the *aśvattha* (grown as a parasite on the *śamī* tree) from which the fire drill is to be made and which therefore stands for the fire.<sup>38</sup> The purport of this view would seem to be that putting the ghee-soaked logs on the fire achieves by itself the intended result of turning the *brāhmaudanika* into the primary *śrauta* fire, apparently without intervention of the fire drill.<sup>39</sup> This would be a maximal realization of the fire's gestation. It would mean, however, as the text cogently argues, a yearlong interval. Deeming such a delay undesirable, the Śatapatha rejects this practice.<sup>40</sup>

On this point the objection raised by a ritualist authority, one Bhāllaveya, against the *brahmaudana* is illuminating. As recorded in the Śatapatha, Bhāllaveya was of the opinion that the rice mess ceremony is a mistake that is similar to doing one thing, preparing a festive meal for brahmins, and intending something quite different, obtaining the *śrauta* fire.<sup>41</sup> For, so the argument runs, “it is not fitting either to put out a fire or to remove it to the south to serve as the cooking fire (*anvāhāryapacana*) once it has been hallowed by putting fuel on it or making an oblation in it under the accompaniment of ṛgvedic verse, chant or *yajus* formulas”—as one does when putting on the ghee-soaked logs. So either the whole *brāhmaudanika* episode should be cut out, or it is itself—that is, only the rite with the *aśvattha* logs—the decisive rite that turns the *brāhmaudanika* into the *śrauta* fire. And anyway the festive meal has to go. Or, as the commentator Sāyaṇa puts it, “The purpose of the *odana* is putting the logs on the fire, not the meal; therefore the meal is to be disregarded.”

The logic of the Śatapatha is unimpeachable, but it does impair the vital hinge of the two-phase *agnyādheya* complex by breaking up the astutely devised dovetailing of the worldly festivity of the *odana* meal, on the one hand, and the extramundane cult of the sacrificial *śrauta* fire, on the other. In doing so the Śatapatha draws the ultimate consequence of the divide between the two spheres, between *grhya* and *śrauta*. And even if it is, in principle, possible to turn the *brāhmaudanika* into a proper *śrauta* fire by means of the *aśvattha* logs smeared with ghee and hallowed with mantras, the solemn meal, the mundane *grhya* characteristic of the *brahmau-*

*dana* ritual, has to be eliminated. This episode would then look like a proper *śrauta* rite, and when, moreover, the *brāhmaudanika* fire is produced by drilling—an option offered by several sūtras—instead of being taken from the domestic hearth, the whole can be taken out of the domestic sphere and safely ensconced in the *śrauta* system of ritual.<sup>42</sup>

In this way we can also understand that, according to the Śatapatha, the sacrificer need not observe restrictions such as keeping awake during the night before the actual *ādhāna*. “As long as he has not yet set up the *śrauta* fire [being still an *anāhitāgni*] he is no more than a mere human and so may as well sleep, if he wants.”<sup>43</sup> In short, he is not yet under the restrictions of his imminent godly state as an extramundane *śrauta* sacrificer.<sup>44</sup> The Śatapatha, then, following ritualistic logic, stresses the abrupt break between the *grhya* and the *śrauta* spheres. The decisive turning point—even more than with the generally older Black Yajurveda—is the churning and installation of the primary *śrauta* fire.

### 3.4

The *agnyādhēya*, as the discussions of the ritualists themselves show, is not the stable and internally consistent complex it is usually supposed to be. Nor does the complex as a whole appear to be an old one. It is first and foremost a ritualistic construction turning on the ambivalence of the worldly householder who is at the same time an extramundane *śrauta* sacrificer and whose domestic fire therefore is both separated from and yet intimately bound up with its *śrauta* counterpart. Bearing down on this pivotal ambivalence the Śatapatha’s strict ritualistic logic came near to deconstructing the artful contrivance of the two-phase *agnyādhēya*. Nevertheless the complex of *brahmaudana*, fire drilling, and sacrifice held together, and even Kātyāyana, the sūtra of the White Yajurveda, kept the double structure intact. But what was it that held the two parts together? Invoking the sheer conservatism of ritual begs the question. Moreover, the *agnyādhēya*’s construction shows that the ritualists certainly did not eschew innovation. In fact, they were reformers rather than conservatives. The *śrauta* system of ritual bears ample witness to their reforming zeal. Facetious as it may sound, it was its very ambivalence that gave the *agnyādhēya* complex its resilience and kept it from breaking apart at the pivotal joint between the two parts. This is the short answer. The long answer starts with the way the ritualists handled ambivalence.

The collective and the individual aspects of the fire and its management are naturally solidary with each other as complementary aspects. Therefore ambivalence is organically built in. As such it does not by itself create a problem. What created the problem was the principle of transcendence—the central motive of ritualism. It forced the ritualists to pry open the or-

ganic coherence of the collective and the individual. To transcend the collectivity the sacrificer was, as we have seen, individualized to the point of being cut off from the collectivity that nonetheless embedded him. And so his fire was split into the duality of the domestic and the sacrificial fire. This, in short, is how the gap between the *grhya* and the *śrauta* fire arose. Having been broken apart the two ends of the original complementarity—the collective and the individual—had to be construed as two separate entities, each complete in itself. But the problem was how to reconnect them. The organic complementarity that was lost had to be replaced by the artificial devices of ritualism. We have seen how this was done by means of the ghee-soaked fuel logs. Lifting them out of their original and self-evident function of tending the fire, the ritualists turned them into the tool that should artificially reconstruct the lost coherence. We have, however, seen that the result did not satisfy even the ritualists themselves. Nor could a fully satisfactory result be expected. With complementarity gone, ambivalence turned into contradiction. How could the complementarity that had been purposely and definitely broken up be reconstructed? Humpty-Dumpty had had his transcendental fall, but the ritualists had to keep trying to put him together again.

The *agnyādheya*, then—like the Vedic system of ritual in general—is not a self-evident, age-old institution coming out of prehistoric limbo but a refractory problem created by the ritualists and calling for the full deployment of their ratiocinative art. Rather than a solution it is a testing ground; it is this that gave the *agnyādheya* its value and kept its double structure intact, for it dealt with the intractable contradiction of man's thrust to transcend himself and it did so in the practical terms of man's control over fire, the prerequisite of his life and survival.

Transferred to the sacrificial scene the fire cult is a reflection on the common experience of the fire. Breaking down diffuse experience into separate elements and construing them in a thoroughly thought-out artificial order, it offers a model for the control of the fire, teaching its proper use and warning against its dangers. But above all the cult of the fire proposes to man an absolute order that holds out to the sacrificer who submits to it the promise of making him transcend his mortal condition. For, as the Śatapatha teaches, in the beginning only Agni, the Fire, was immortal. It was through the “immortal *agnyādheya*” that the gods who had been without an *ātman*, a self, and who were therefore mortal—“for he who is without a self (*anātman*) is mortal”—gained an immortal self.<sup>45</sup> But then the fire the gods established as their immortal self must be sharply set off against the fire that the gods' opponents, the asuras, simply put down on the ground, saying “burn the grass here, burn the wood here”—a reference to the use of fire in burning jungle land to improve it or to make clearances—“cook the *odana* here, cook the meat here.” This asuric fire, we are told, is what



humans use in their day-to-day life.<sup>46</sup> What the Śatapatha plays on is the sharp divide—here in terms of asuric and mortal as against godly and immortal—between the *grhya* and the *śrauta* fire.

Of particular interest for our present purpose is the reference in this passage to the cooking of the *odana* meal as typical of the mundane usages of mortal man. We saw how the ritualists unsuccessfully struggled to empty it of its worldly content—even to the point of ruling out its obvious purpose of serving as a festive meal—so as to incorporate it into their exclusive *śrauta* system. However, this also brought out the artificiality and comparatively late rise of the *grhya-śrauta* divide. For all the problems it caused the ritualists the *odana* rice mess is no less an original part of the fire cult than the *caru*, which is nothing but the *śrauta* version of the same dish. Another *śrauta* version of the *odana* is the *anvāhārya*, equally a rice mess, prepared and divided among the brahmin officiants—but not yet eaten—as part of the *śrauta* ritual. The original place of the *odana* in the cult is, moreover, amply attested by the so-called *savayajñas* of the Atharvaveda.<sup>47</sup> And, as already mentioned, we also find it prescribed in the prestigious horse sacrifice, albeit peripherally at the beginning and conclusion of the complete sequence. At the latter occasion even twelve *brahmaudanas* on twelve consecutive days, recalling the interval between the *agnyādheya*'s rice mess and the actual setting up of the *śrauta* fires, are prescribed.<sup>48</sup>

All this clearly illustrates the central importance of the *odana* as a communal sacrificial meal in the originally integral fire cult. As such it has an organically built-in ambivalence. It is both a communal affair and the individual sacrificer's prestation. Its central importance as well as its built-in ambivalence made the *odana* the fulcrum of the ritualists' endeavor to square the circle of both rigidly separating and reconnecting the *grhya* and the *śrauta*, the domestic and the cultic fire. From a central feature of the fire cult it was turned into the ambivalent hinge between the communal and the individual spheres. If we now return to the question of what kept the precarious two-part *agnyādheya* construct intact the answer is the *odana*.

### 3.5

That there was originally no absolute difference between domestic and cultic fire is clearly indicated by the Iranian evidence. As we already saw, we find there too a clear-cut distinction between the domestic fire and the cult fire set apart in its temple—especially the “victory fire,” the *Ātash Bahrām*—but the divide was in no way as sharp as the one devised by the ancient Indian ritualists. The cult fire should, of course, be pure and safeguarded against defilement (as is, e.g., caused by dead matter being burned), but then the ritual provides for elaborate purification, namely by igniting light combustibles through the glow of the defiled fire—a procedure also known to the Vedic ritualists under the name of *ambariṣa* or *uttapana*, but not used

for purification—and repeating this a number of times.<sup>49</sup> But there is no abrupt break between the defiled and the purified fire. Both are obviously meant, and in a way can be seen, to be one and the same fire. In the Indian case the idea of the fire being defiled or in need of purification is not unknown.<sup>50</sup> But no such effect is given to it as the elaborately repetitious purification devised by the Zoroastrians. Rather one sets up a new fire if necessary. Thus, for instance, the fire used to cremate its deceased owner is extinguished or left to grow cold and replaced by a new one usually produced by drilling. Instead of the repetitious purification procedure, Vedic ritualism has repeated fire drilling. Even the primary *śrauta* fire, the *gārhapatya* (after it has been symbolically transferred to the fire drill), may be left to grow cold and churned anew for the next sacrifice.<sup>51</sup>

The clearest illustration, however, of the fundamental unity of domestic and cult fire is the Zoroastrian *Ātash Dādghāh*, which is a household fire that has been turned into a cult fire by putting it in an “appointed place” (this being the basic meaning of *dādghāh*), that is, in a fire temple. In this way we can also understand that the Indian Parsis managed for hundreds of years (until the seventeenth century) with only one *Ātash Bahrām* temple. The laity did their daily devotions at their own hearth fires, which were kept constantly burning and in a state of strict purity. For the high rituals, such as the *yasna*, that can only be performed by a priest, the priest brought fire from his own hearth to the communal “fire house” (*aqūārī* or *darimīhr*), where the other essentials of the fire temple were available, and carried it home again afterward.<sup>52</sup> This clearly brings out the undivided unity of the domestic and the cultic functions of the fire. The basic divide for the Zoroastrian is pure as against defiled, for the Vedic ritualist, domestic as against cultic. In both cases the divide is a ritualistically reflected and artificially devised one. But for the present purpose the interesting point is that the Zoroastrian comparison shows the domestic fire to be fully solidary with the temple fire. It is only less protected against the world and its abuses, if not directly open to them.

When we now look further into the *grhya-śrauta* dichotomy, it will be seen that in India too the two fires are not so different from each other as the ritualists wanted them to be. In the first place it is striking that the primary *śrauta* fire should be called *gārhapatya*, belonging to the lord of the house (*grhapati*), a term generally associated with Agni ruling over hearth and home. And indeed its function is the typically domestic one of preparing the sacrificial food, part of which will be offered in the *āhavanīya*. So it is just like the domestic fire, except that the eating takes place in an unspecified manner afterward, outside the time and space of the ritual. Nor is there any difference in the obligation to maintain the fire.<sup>53</sup> In actual practice it is the domestic fire rather than the *gārhapatya* to which the obligation of permanent maintenance applies in full force, for the fiction of the transfer to the fire drill allows the sacrificial fire to be moved—especially in the case of

the soma sacrifice, which is performed away from the home—without having to be kept burning.<sup>54</sup> The household fire on the other hand remains fixed on the domestic hearth, where it is constantly served. Similarly there is no essential difference as regards establishing the fire on the domestic hearth or on its *śrauta* stand. The fact that the latter is churned from the fire drill does not make it essentially different from the domestic fire represented by the *brāhmaudanika*. As already mentioned, this fire may also be obtained by drilling. By itself the drilling does not impart a special quality to the *śrauta* fire. In this respect the difference is that drilling is the *only* way to obtain the *gārhapatya*, while for the *grhya* fire it is just one of several ways, albeit not the most preferred one. Preferably the domestic fire is the one used at the wedding, and since the wedding ceremony takes place at the bride's parental home it is derived from the householder's in-laws. One might even say that the domestic fire is perpetuated through the female line—a point that the rigid brahmanic stress on the patriline is unable to give due weight; full attention is therefore only given to the termination and replacement of the domestic fire when it has performed its last service at the cremation, as is also the case of the *śrauta* fires.<sup>55</sup> But if it is not the nuptial fire, it must anyway be taken from other people's hearth. Interestingly, it is even stated that, of course, the fire that one has churned oneself is most auspicious (*punya*) but also “unproductive” (*anardhuka*).<sup>56</sup> Here, it would seem, we come on the essential difference. The productiveness of the domestic fire—which cooks the festive communal meal and is derived from other people's, mostly in-laws', hearth and perpetuated through marriage alliance—lies in its social function, and that is exactly what has as a matter of principle been stripped away from the *gārhapatya* that is and should be exclusively *punya* and nothing else.

### 3.6

At this point a short parenthetical note should be made as to the ritual importance of the two *araṇis* that form the fire drill. There is, apart from the symbolism of the two *araṇis*—the hard, male *aśvattha* grown out of the tough female *śamī* tree, a combination ultimately rejected in favor of the single *aśvattha* wood—nothing sacred or holy about the fire drill as such, and its use is, as one would expect, a fairly common practice.<sup>57</sup> In fact, it is not very much evidenced by its occurrence in the ritual, where we find it, as a matter of course, in the periphery before and after the actual proceedings when the fires are readied or terminated. There is, apart from the *agny-ādheya*, only one exception: the drilling of fire in the animal sacrifice, where it seems at first sight to be totally superfluous since the fires are already installed and burning. This puzzling situation will concern us further on.<sup>58</sup> Mostly, however, the drilling method is used when the fire—whether do-

mestic or *śrauta*—has inadvertently gone out<sup>59</sup> and in case one goes on an extended journey or moves to settle elsewhere.<sup>60</sup> It can therefore be applied, as we saw, to obtain the domestic fire and so also the *brāhmaudanika*.<sup>61</sup> The generalized, matter-of-fact way the fire drill is used tallies perfectly with Zoroastrian practice. There fire produced by friction either with a fire drill or with flint stones is, as one will expect, part of the sixteen fires that go into the elaborate composition of the *Ātaṣ Bahrām*. But it comes in almost as an afterthought, being simply added to the sixteenth fire taken from the domestic hearth of a believer.<sup>62</sup> Apparently the fire produced by friction is valued only as a purely pragmatic proposition without any special cultic significance in its own right.

What gives the fire drill its special importance in ancient India is that it sets the fire apart from all other fires, *śrauta* or *grhya*, and thereby emphasizes the exclusive link with its owner. Above all, it makes him independent, allowing him to make fire where there was none without having to beg, rob, or steal it from someone else, as Prometheus had to do. This extra value has a particular edge in Vedic ritualism, for the main thrust, as we have discussed, was precisely the ultramundane independence of man as a sacrificer from the surrounding world. This requires him to be the exclusive master of his own personal fire. When the sacrificer symbolically has the fire “mount” the *araṇis* by warming them over the glowing members of the dying fire he makes it enter into himself—an idea that is clearly expressed in the alternative of warming his hands instead of the *araṇis* over the fire.<sup>63</sup> When churning the fire to reinstall it, he churns it out of himself, exteriorizing, as it were, his own self, for he is himself the *yoni*, the womb of his fire.<sup>64</sup> Hence the identification of the fire with one’s immortal *ātman* we have already encountered. Although it is an unassuming household tool, the significance of the fire drill in Vedic ritualism is momentous. It allows the sacrificer to create his own universe beyond home and community, even if it is only the universe of ritualism lasting no longer than the duration of the ritual.

This will also clarify why, in contrast to Vedic ritualism, fire produced by friction has a strikingly low profile in the Zoroastrian cult. What counts on the Iranian side is the collectivist and integrative dimension of the fire impressively standing out in the composite nature of the *Ātaṣ Bahrām* that unites the whole world, including even the alien cremation fire. Therefore there is no interest in the individualizing capacity of the fire drill that is of such importance to the Vedic ritualist. In the Zoroastrian cult the fire’s way to transcendence is through purification, and that is why especially the cremation fire, before all other fires, has to be rescued from its tormented condition and made part of the cult fire that integrates all fires on the transcendent plane of absolute purity. On the Indian side by contrast the reverse direction was followed. There, instead of purification, the key to transcendence was the otherwise trivial fire drill that made it possible to individualize

the fire and make it break away from the world. That is why, as we observed already, churning is to the Vedic cult fire what purification is to the Zoroastrian's fire.

At the same time, however, we should remember that neither purification nor drilling makes the fire essentially different. In the Iranian case this is obvious. After its purification the fire is still the same in a purified form. Its Indian counterpart is equally meant to be the same through the symbolic transfer to the *araṇis*. Drilling only sets it apart from every other fire. But this feature does not make the *śrauta* fire different from the *grhya* or the *brāhmaudanika* fire that may equally be drilled and so set apart from all other fires. Originally, however, as the Zoroastrian evidence goes to show, they were one and the same fire. Only when they were separated, each became the center of its own cult—domestic on the one hand, *śrauta* on the other.

### 3.7

If we now look at the content of the cult it can easily be seen that the *śrauta* and the domestic fire share the same cultic pattern. The two types are varieties of the same cult, separate but similar, one elaborately ornate, vaunting three or five fires—in the complicated soma ritual there are even twelve hearths—but all dependent on the one *gārhapatya*, the other simple, without the overwhelmingly intricate apparatus and centered on the single household fire. In both cases, however, the pattern of the cult is only the fire's actual use and maintenance enacted at the privileged scene of either the domestic hearth or the ritual enclosure (*devayajana*). Briefly, as regards the *śrauta* ritual, the fire is ceremonially fueled under the recitation of mantras (the *sāmidhenī* or “kindling” verses), the sacrificial food is cooked, oblations are made, after the oblation the food is divided, and finally the fire is refueled—to keep it burning during the night—and worshiped with sets of mantras (*agnyupasthāna*).<sup>65</sup> In different terms, the cult of the fire culminates in sacrifice. Therefore the focus and main part of the solemn installation of the *śrauta* fires is indeed the *īṣṭi* or more correctly the series of *īṣṭis*, which are centered on the newly installed fire. In this respect it is not different from the installation of the domestic fire, which requires a *pākayajña*, the domestic counterpart of the *īṣṭi*.

One might be inclined to suppose that the worship of the fire as such, the *agnyupasthāna*, combined with putting fuel on the fire represents the actual fire cult, as different from sacrifice. It is elaborately dealt with as an optional sequel to the daily evening *agnihotra*, the milk offering in the fire.<sup>66</sup> This could suggest that the worship of the fire is a separate and detachable ritual, formally epitomizing the care of the fire at the end of the sacrifice. However, on further inspection the *agnyupasthāna* turns out to

stand itself for sacrifice. It includes the invitatory and offering verses of the oblations for the “bodies” of Agni (*tanūhavīṃṣi*) that figure prominently in the series of the *agnyādhēya iṣṭis*.<sup>67</sup> The Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā also includes the *yajyānuvākyās* of the Agni cake offered at the *agnyādhēya* and at the fortnightly new or full moon sacrifice.<sup>68</sup> Now it is ruled that instead of reciting the worshiping verses every evening one may do this only once a year. With the Mānavas the period of a year is even the rule—hence the already mentioned optional nature of the daily *agnyupasthāna*.<sup>69</sup> As the *brāhmaṇa* texts argue, one would irritate the gods by one’s daily repeated entreaties.<sup>70</sup> Although lifelike, the reasoning is not quite convincing, because one does so anyway through the twice-daily *agnihotra*. The real reason appears when we notice that instead of the verbal worship one can also perform once a year the *tanūhavīṃṣi* sacrifice.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the solemn worship of the fire substitutes for a fullscale yearly sacrifice.

The line of development seems clear. The periodical (mostly yearly) sacrifice—frequently occurring also in other contexts—was replaced by verbal worship. Ritualistic *horror vacui*, rejecting intervals and emphasizing instead closed, fully regulated sequences of acts and mantras, strives to fill out the interstices. Therefore most authorities prefer to have the *agnyupasthāna* every evening, even if this doubles the daily *agnihotra*, which, as Hermann Oldenberg has already observed, is originally the cultic version of the fire’s maintenance.<sup>72</sup> Significantly, the *grhya* ritual that also includes the *agnihotra*, as well as a simpler version of the fortnightly sacrifices and the animal sacrifice, has no separate *agnyupasthāna*. There the worship of the fire is simply the twice-daily *agnihotra*. In this respect it is interesting that the last time the pupil has put a log of wood on his teacher’s fire—the regular duty of the pupil—is considered to be his first morning oblation as an independent householder. And the same meaning is assigned to the oblation at the time of the wedding.<sup>73</sup> Here servicing the fire and sacrifice are practically identical. One can therefore well understand the ritualists’ hesitation in prescribing a daily *agnyupasthāna* on top of the *agnihotra*. It is, in fact, supererogatory and as such is optional. The yearly recurring worship, on the other hand—either verbal or as sacrifice—has been given another meaning, that of a periodic renewal, as we will see. At any rate, it is clear that the cult of the fire takes the form of sacrifice and, conversely, that sacrifice is molded by the cult of the fire.

At this point we cannot avoid coming back to the burnt oblation. Since sacrifice and fire worship are entwined to the point of being identical, the question arises whether, apart from the destruction of the abandoned part of the sacrificial food, the offering *in* the fire should not be viewed also as an offering *to* the fire, a dramatic way of worshiping it. However, the oblation is often of a nature that is not favorable to keep the flames going. Unless it is ghee—as it is in fact in most cases—the offering is likely to have

a choking effect. Thus an *odana*-like preparation is indeed prescribed as a means to extinguish a cremation fire.<sup>74</sup> The usual layer of ghee in the offering ladle underneath the oblatinal matter and another layer on top of it are very much practical measures. The burnt oblation is not a service rendered to the fire but one required of it. To the sacrificial cult of the fire the burnt oblation is not necessary if not a positive hindrance as it is in the Parsi view. In other words, a clear distinction must be made between oblations or libations such as ghee or animal fat that feed and stimulate the fire as against those that have a damping effect. Against this background one readily understands Agni's fear of succumbing under the weight of its sacrificial function. This is the mythic theme of Agni's deceased elder brothers: "Agni had three elder brothers; they perished carrying the offering to the gods."<sup>75</sup> It is especially the loud *vaśat* call, the signal for pouring the offering in the fire, that is the fatal blow. There is, as Hertha Krick suggests, more behind this motif—notably Agni's periodic disappearance and the sacrificial contest to which we will have to return—but for our purpose here it is significant that the burnt oblation is seen as fatally threatening to the fire.<sup>76</sup>

But also without the burnt oblation the fire is essential to sacrifice. It prepares the sacrificial substances even if they are not offered in the fire. Thus, for instance, the funerary meal (*śrāddha*) of which a few lumps (*pinḍa*)—most often three—are deposited in a shallow furrow as an offering to the ancestors who are supposed to feast on the hot vapor, or in general the *bali* offerings that are similarly exposed. In this connection we should not overlook the *vedi*, the grass bed on which the offerings are put and that is also the seat of the divine guests invited to the feast. It suggests both offering by exposure and the communal meal bringing together divine and human guests.<sup>77</sup> We noticed already the intimate association of Agni with the *vedi*. As the divine *hotṛ* and leader, Agni is seated on or at the *vedi* (*vediśad*) or is invited to take his place on the grass (*barhis*). In this way, as well as by ghee libations rather than by burnt offering, Agni is sacrificially worshiped.

Interestingly Herodotus, describing what seems to be a private layman's sacrifice, relates the exposure of the dissected and boiled meat on a grass bed without anything being offered in the fire. After some time, we are told, the sacrificer carries the meat away and uses it "as he pleases"—not unlikely for a festive communal meal.<sup>78</sup> Although, as Herodotus tells us, "they neither build altars, nor kindle fire," the absence of fire is implausible since the meat must anyway be boiled. What struck Herodotus may not have been the improbable absence of fire but the lack of an altar on which the fire is ceremonially kindled, as his Greek background would have made him expect. But even if it does not carry fire the altar is clearly there in the form of the hallowed grass bed on which the offerings are exposed.

The clearest example, however, of a sacrificial feast without burnt offering is the *agnyādhēya*'s *brahmaudana*.<sup>79</sup> Now it is true that the sūtras of the Taittirīya branch of the Black Yajurveda have an offering of the *odana* made in the fire before the eating. But the matter is suspect. For one thing most of the Taittirīya sūtras give as an alternative a verbal *abhimantraṇa*, uttering the offering mantra over the *odana* without making an oblation.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, the Maitrayanīya sūtras do not use the formula for an *odana* oblation—which they do not have—but for a ghee libation preceding the cooking of the *odana*, while the White Yajurveda's sūtra has neither burnt oblation nor *abhimantraṇa*.<sup>81</sup> It seems clear, then, that the Taittirīyakas have reinterpreted, not without hesitation, the ghee libation as a burnt oblation of the *odana* in the interest of bringing the ritual in line with the *śrauta* paradigm of the *iṣṭi*. The original, non-*śrauta*, procedure can, however, still be seen in the atharvanic *odana* ritual, the so-called *savayajñas*, where no part of the rice mess is offered in the fire.

Ritualistic theory has it that in such cases the oblation is made in the "fire" of the *brahman* (*brahmani huta*)—that is, in the four brahmins who are being feasted on the rice mess.<sup>82</sup> But the reason that no part of the *odana* is given over to destruction, in the fire or otherwise, would seem to be that it is a gift—like the *anvābhārya* food that is closely related to the *odana* or rather is directly derived from it. Significantly the verb that goes with *savayajña* is "to give" (*savayajñān dadāti*), and the sacrificer, if he is not called "the actor" (*kartr*), is styled "the giver" (*dātr*). Naturally the sacrificer does not take a portion of his gift for himself, not even the remainder. In the normal *iṣṭi*, by contrast, he is assigned his own share (*yajamānabhāga*).<sup>83</sup> But in the case of the *odana* he offers up the whole of the sacrificial food; so there is no need for him to show his disinterestedness by giving over a portion, however small it may be, to destruction—this being, as I have argued, the point of the burnt oblation.<sup>84</sup> The self-denying *tyāga*, the abandonment, has already been realized.

Yet the fire is essential to the proceedings in more than the banal sense of a cooking fire. Or rather, this sense is far from being banal. In the case of the *agnyādhēya*'s *brāhmaudanika* fire, which is elevated to being something of a gateway to transcendence, this is obvious, in fact entirely too obvious to convince the ritualists, as we have seen. But also in the atharvanic *savayajñas* the fire is a central and lively presence. Accordingly it is singled out as an essential requirement for the rice mess ritual. It is—like the *brāhmaudanika*—either freshly drilled or taken from the domestic hearth, ghee libations are prescribed, and logs or chips of wood are put on the fire in accordance with the normal paradigm of the new and full moon sacrifice.<sup>85</sup> But it is kept free from the burnt oblation. The all but exclusive emphasis on the oblation in the fire appears to be a special development in Vedic ritualism.



## 3.8

While our discussion of the fire cult leaves no doubt about the basic unity of its sacrificial pattern across the *grhya-śrauta* divide, we have also become aware of an interesting point of difference. This concerns the offering in the fire. Succinctly put, the *śrauta* ritual maximizes the burnt oblation at the expense of the communal meal, while its domestic counterpart gives full scope to the feast—reformulated as the meritorious feeding of brahmins—and is prepared to trade the burnt offering for the digestive fire of the brahmin guest.

The standard *grhya* ritual is by definition socially oriented and so stresses throughout the feeding of brahmins—as, for instance, the funerary or commemorative *śrāddha* feast. Generally speaking the householder's five daily "great sacrifices" (*mahāyajña*)—to living beings or spirits (*bhūta*), to men, to ancestors, to the gods, and to *brahman* (the memorization of the Veda)—are except the last one concerned with hospitality and the distribution of food and other gifts. The standardization of the *grhya*, however, clearly shows the restrictive impact of the prestigious *śrauta* system to which it frequently refers as its model. The domestic sacrifice (*pākayajña*) is very much a simplified version of the *īṣṭi* model. Equally the sacrificial paradigm of the Kauśika Sūtra's *ājyatantra* (in which the magical rites characteristic of the Atharvaveda are inserted) corresponds step by step with the *śrauta* scheme of the *īṣṭi*.<sup>86</sup> In this respect it is interesting that the *ādihāna* of the domestic fire, according to the White Yajurveda's *grhya* ritual, while explicitly following the *śrauta* ritual of the *agnyādhya*, introduces an oblation of the *odana* in the fire (which is lacking in its *śrauta* counterpart). Apparently this burnt offering is meant to conform to the *pākayajña*'s *īṣṭi* model.<sup>87</sup>

The difference between *grhya* and *śrauta* ritual—roughly a festive meal as against burnt offering—comes out clearest in the *brahmaudana* and the closely related *odana* ritual preserved in the *savayajñas* of the Atharvaveda. Although this ritual and the Kauśika Sūtra in general are classified as domestic ritual, the *odana* would seem to predate the *grhya-śrauta* divide. It combines, as already noticed, the collective and individual aspects of sacrifice. Here we find a remnant of the *sacra publica* that are otherwise so conspicuously absent from the *śrauta* ritual. But even in the *grhya* ritual, notwithstanding its openness to society, public festivities are restricted and very much pushed into the background. Its subject is first and foremost the individual householder—the same as the *śrauta* sacrificer—irrespective of the surrounding society. No wonder the refractory *odana* ritual caused the ritualists the difficulties we noticed.

The sensitive point that gave rise to so much ritualistic ratiocination in dealing with the *odana* is that it does not do anything for the setting up of

the fire but on the contrary celebrates the fire once it has been set up with the preparation and offering of a festive meal. It follows the installation of the fire instead of preceding it, as is clearly visible in the Atharvaveda's *odana* sacrificēs. As a celebration of the fire in its own right it quite naturally slots itself into the festivity of the fire's installation, in the manner of a house-warming party. In this way we can understand the practice, reported but rejected by the Śatapatha, that the *brahmaudana* and the ghee-imbued fuel sticks by themselves bring about the desired result of putting the sacrificer in possession of his *śrauta* fire.<sup>88</sup> Bhāllaveya's objection, as we saw, went even further; the *brahmaudana* is either the whole celebration or it is nothing and had better be left out.

The *odana* ritual, then, was by itself a fully fledged form of the sacrificial fire cult. When the ritualists split the original unitary pattern in *grhya* and *śrauta* the rice mess was an obvious choice for linking the two types of ritual in the *agnyādheya*. But the split also meant that the two broken parts had to be fully rounded out as two complete systems, parallel but independent from each other. They were, in other words, made each other's double. Hence the similarity of domestic and *śrauta* sacrifice in general, the former being a diminished version of the latter but containing all its essential elements. On the other hand other elements from what was now the domestic ritual had to be reworked in the *śrauta* system. Thus the *odana* was split in two ways, the *caru* that is used for the burnt oblation and the *anvāhāya* gift of food for the officiating brahmins—of which there are indeed four in the *īṣṭi*. This may also explain why the Maitrāyaṇī attempts—albeit somewhat surreptitiously—to turn the three fuel sticks smeared with the ghee left in the *brahmaudana* vessel (as well as with the remainder of the rice mess) into a burnt oblation for the Ādityas. This attempt to have the best of both worlds—*grhya* and *śrauta*—cannot, however, carry conviction, because it means that the offering follows the meal instead of preceding it so that the gods have to make do with its remainder. This, as we saw, led the Taittirīyakas to introduce, albeit hesitatingly, an oblation of the *odana*. It is only in the *grhya* ritual that we saw the *brahmaudana* being turned into a fully regular *pākayajña*, centered on the burnt oblation and with the meal following after the conclusion of the ritual, in conformity with the *śrauta* model of the *īṣṭi*. But in the case of the domestic ritual the unitary character of the *odana* ritual, predating the *grhya-śrauta* divide, did not have to be pressed into service to link the two systems across the divide. Remaining within the bounds of the *grhya* system the *odana* could with comparative ease be assimilated to the domestic ritual.

But the refractory *odana* ritual asserts itself again in the *śrauta* part of the *agnyādheya* where its unifying capacity is crucial. Among the *īṣṭis* celebrating the newly installed *śrauta* fires there is also a *caru* for Aditi.<sup>89</sup> This *caru*, however, is simply a replay of the *brahmaudana*. It is given as a whole

to the four officiating brahmins to eat without a portion being offered in the fire as is normally the case.<sup>90</sup> Incidentally, we see here the transition from pre-*śrauta odana* to *śrauta caru*. But the *odana* ritual makes yet another appearance, this time not even disguised as a *caru* assigned to Aditi or any other deity. In case the *agnyādhya* is not to be followed by a soma sacrifice, the Mānavas prescribe as the concluding rite an *odana* to be given as a meal to the four brahmin officiants and accompanied by ghee libations in the fire. This *odana* replaces the offerings to the three “bodies” of Agni and possibly the other *īṣṭis* also. The deities of these *īṣṭis* are honored by the accompanying ghee libations, and the *īṣṭis* themselves are then performed a year later.<sup>91</sup>

This last instance is particularly instructive. It gives in a nutshell the whole of the *odana* ritual—festive meal and tending the fire with ghee libations, as we still find it in the atharvanic *savayajñas*. It also points up the *odana* ritual’s pre-*śrauta* unitary character that made it essential to the ritualists’ construction of the *agnyādhya*. For it is used here not only to stand in for the deferred *īṣṭis* but even comes in the place of the soma sacrifice, suggesting a basic equivalence. It is, however, not just a substitute but rather appears to be reinstated as a sacrificial ritual in its own right.

In the first place, then, we see that the *odana* stands at the beginning of the *agnyādhya*—as the *brahmaudana*—and at the end either as Aditi *caru* or replacing the *īṣṭis* and even the soma sacrifice. But it also recurs after a yearlong interval. The Black Yajurveda still prescribes such an interval—rejected, as we saw, by the Śatapatha—before the actual installation of the *śrauta* fires, during which the *brāhmaudanika* fire should be maintained. Or again, if the sacrificer would somehow not be in a position to perform the *śrauta* sacrifice a year after the first *brahmaudana*, he should repeat it.<sup>92</sup> The conclusion seems warranted that the *odana* ritual was a cyclically recurrent festivity in its own right.

Even more, these ritualistic details strongly suggest that the *odana* once was the core of the fire cult’s original unitary pattern. This ceremony would seem to have been a considerably more ambitious affair than an unassuming rice mess enriched with ghee. We noted already the *brahmaudana*’s connection with the sacrifice of a cow that it has replaced in the gambling ritual. Here we should also mention the he-goat that must be kept bound to a stake near the *brāhmaudanika* fire during the night and at the time the new fire is churned early next morning. Although it is to be given afterward to the *agnīdh*, the “fire-kindling” officiant, its original purpose would have been that of a sacrificial victim, as Hertha Krick has already suggested.<sup>93</sup> When we finally consider that an authoritative rule has it that the *ādihāna* must be followed, after an interval of at the most a year by an animal sacrifice,<sup>94</sup> it seems warranted to assume that the fire cult consisted in a periodic animal sacrifice—the victim probably being a cow—and a festive com-

munal meal of an *odana* that apart from cereals may well have contained animal meat.<sup>95</sup>

### 3.9

We will have occasion to return to the *odana* feast, its original nature, and its connection with the game of dice.<sup>96</sup> At this point, however, we should draw together what our inquiry of the *agnyādheya* has taught us so far about the cult of the fire. It would seem that this important ritual complex is a relatively late ritualistic construction. It was necessitated by the transcendental breakthrough that brought about the rigorous individualization and even desocialization of the *śrauta* fire cult and separated it from its domestic counterpart. The interest of the *agnyādheya* is in the deployment of the ritualists' ratiocinative art that comes out with particular clarity in their discussion of the fuel sticks to be put on the *brāhmaudanika* fire. Thereby it also gives us a lead as to the development of the Vedic fire cult.

We have seen that the second part of the *agnyādheya*'s two-part structure doubles the community-oriented *odana* feast by translating it in terms of the desocialized *śrauta* sacrifice. In other words, the *brahmaudana* represents the original sacrificial feast and periodic culmination point of the fire cult, anterior to the divide between the domestic *grhya* and the "solemn" *śrauta* ritual. As such it was also the obvious way to celebrate the installation of the household and its cultic fire or their reinstallation when settling out. This is still clear in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa when it discusses the question of whether the *dakṣiṇāgni* or *anvāhāryapacana* should be set up each day for the *agnihotra* milk offering where it is not strictly needed. In this connection our text states that only the oblatinal fire, the *āhavanīya*, is to be taken out but adds that the *anvāhāryapacana* may be taken out and set up in the new residence (*navāvasite*) where then a meal should be prepared and offered to brahmins. This closely recalls the *brahmaudana*, albeit without the latter's ritualistic elaboration. Here we can still observe the original unity of the *śrauta* ritual's southern fire and the *anvāhārya* food prepared on it with the *grhya* fire and the domestic feast.

The *brahmaudana* shows its pre-*śrauta* origin in yet another way. Although the fire on which it is cooked is worshiped by ceremonially putting fuel imbued with ghee on it, it is not burdened with oblatinal matter. In this respect it resembles the Iranian tendency, which was already noticed by Herodotus and which was to become the dominant or even exclusive Zoroastrian practice, of a sacrificial cult without burnt oblation. On this point the Indian development of the fire cult sharply diverged from its Iranian relative. Relegating both immolation and festive meal to the margin of the sacrificial grounds the *śrauta* maximized instead the role of the fire by giv-

ing all but exclusive emphasis to the burnt oblation that came to be excluded from the Zoroastrian cult. The *brahmaudana*, however, still shows the original potential of a sacrificial cult involving immolation and festive meal as well as the ceremonial tending of the fire with fuel and ghee—in the Zoroastrian case animal fat—but without requiring the fire to burn the oblation.

## *The Periodicity and Mobility of the Fire*

### 4.1

THE ODANA FEAST HAS ALREADY drawn our attention to the periodicity of the fire cult. In this respect the time that may intervene between the *odana* cooking and the churning of the *śrauta* fire—even a yearlong period is mentioned—is highly suggestive.<sup>1</sup> When we further consider that the *istis* that follow the churning and installation of the *gārhapatya* fire are a replay in *śrauta* terms of the domestic *odana* ceremony one will naturally think of a festive yearly renewal of the fire, involving the extinguishing of the old fire and the kindling of a new one. Could such a practice account for the pattern of the ancient Indian fire cult and, more specifically, for the origin of the *agnyādheya*?

The renewal of the fire is certainly an old and widespread practice. The example that immediately springs to mind is the Christian liturgical usage of a three-day fire interdict followed on Easter Sunday by the new fire being brought into the church. In ancient Greece, to take another example, the island of Lemnos knew a yearly lustration involving the extinction of the fires for a period of nine days.<sup>2</sup> After that period a new fire was ceremonially brought from Delos and distributed among the households and the workshops of the craftsmen. Lustration and new beginning are equally prominent in the ancient usage in Argos, where the household fire was extinguished when a death had occurred. After the period of mourning it was renewed by taking fire from the communal state hearth. Such renewal is also known to have been practiced at other occasions. After their victory over the Persians at Plataea the victorious Greeks decided to fetch new fire from the Delphi sanctuary. The kindling of a new fire taken from a sacred place at periodic feasts is well known in general.

In ancient India too the notion of a periodic, especially yearly, lustration and renewal of the fire is clearly expressed. “In the same way that men, horse and cattle wear out so also the fire, once it has been set up, wears out; at the end of a year one worships the fire—especially the oblatinal *āhavanīya* fire—with the verses addressed to Agni *pavamāna*, ‘being purified’

[and to the other “bodies” of Agni, namely *pāvaka*, “purifier”, and *śuci*, “pure”]; thereby he makes it new again, not wearing out, and he also purifies it.”<sup>3</sup> This is, as we have already seen when discussing the *tanūhaviṃśi*, the verbal worship of the fire that has taken the place of a sacrificial festivity, which is at the same time the periodic climax of the fire cult. And this appears to be tantamount to the solemn renewal of the fire.

But the strongest evidence of the fire’s renewal is the second setting up of the *śrauta* fires, the *punarādhēya*, essentially a repeat performance of the *agnyādhēya* complex, while the Taittirīya branch of the Black Yajurveda even has a third *ādhāna*.<sup>4</sup> The reasons the texts give for repeating the ritual are, however, not overly convincing. Clearly the ritualists had considerable difficulty in explaining the repeated setting up of the *śrauta* fire, which is meant to be a once-and-for-all event. The brāhmaṇas hint at various misfortunes that may befall the sacrificer during the year after the first *ādhāna*. Incidentally, the year interval turns up again. The misfortunes befalling the sacrificer during this period are said to be caused by the fire, which claims its share and so attacks the sacrificer, his progeny, or his livestock.<sup>5</sup> The way to let the fire have its share in orderly fashion is then to remove it and set up another one. Being exclusively dedicated to Agni—in the first *ādhāna* also other gods receive *īṣṭis*—the *punarādhēya* is said to be his rightful due. It is, however, distinctly odd that, to give the fire its share, it should first be removed. It is even stranger, since the removal of the fire is, precisely in the context of the *punarādhēya*, regarded as tantamount to manslaughter.<sup>6</sup> We will briefly return to this point later. But what emerges from the lame excuses for the repeated *ādhāna* is that, misfortune or no misfortune, the fire must anyway be reestablished, for the fire wants its share. And the fire’s share is sacrifice, this being the actual content of its cult.

Here we are back again at the sacrificial pattern of the fire cult that emerged from our discussion of the *odana* ritual. And as we have already surmised this entails animal sacrifice. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, dealing with animal sacrifice in general, states that it renews the sacrificial fires using the same argument we have already met with regard to the yearly *īṣṭi* for the “bodies” of Agni. “As he is offering the oblations the sacrificer’s fires become decrepit; after them the sacrificer [himself] wears out [and] after the sacrificer [his] cattle and household; by offering the animal sacrifice he makes the fires new again, after the renewal of the fires the sacrificer [and] after the sacrificer [his] cattle and household [are renewed].”<sup>7</sup> Our passage then continues with the argument we met as an explanation for the *punarādhēya*, namely, that the *śrauta* fires claiming their share are after their owner, the sacrificer, who therefore must redeem himself with an animal sacrifice. “The year should not pass without the sacrificer having offered an [animal] sacrifice.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, this is, in terms of the *śrauta* ritual, the scenario

of the periodic *odana* and animal sacrifice that constitutes the high time of the fire cult.

The notion of the fire being in need of renewal and purification after it has been exhausted by heavy use seems self-evident. In Zoroastrianism it has been developed to the point that it is a highly meritorious act to rescue a fire polluted and tormented through the burning of dead matter, by purifying it in the elaborate way outlined above and bringing it to a temple for safekeeping or, alternatively, for allowing it to grow cold.<sup>9</sup> In Vedic India we come across similar notions of the fire being misused and, as we saw, being somehow purified. “Agni had no desire for this world; because they cook raw meat, cremate man, cook stolen [food], therefore he had no desire for this world.”<sup>10</sup> In the Vedic case, however, this notion was developed in another direction. The text continues by telling us that “when Agni turned to this world, he withdrew from it with those ‘bodies’ of his that are proper for sacrificial worship (*yajñiya*).” These “bodies” are, of course, the *pavamāna*, *pāvaka*, and *śuci* bodies of the *tanūhavīṃsi* sacrifice, and with these he entered the cattle, the waters, and the sun. This is not yet far removed from the Iranian conception. Where the Vedic version takes a different, even opposite, turn is that the fire, far from being “rescued” and purified, is to be retrieved from its dispersed hiding places and pressed into the service of man through the sacrifice for the “bodies” of Agni. And it is not the fire that is purified by man but man who is purified by the fire. “When having washed his hands and taken a bath he puts his faith [in sacrifice], then the fire [that had entered] in the waters purifies him [and] seasons him (*svadayati*).”<sup>11</sup>

Vedic India and Zoroastrian Iran share the notion of the fire’s being polluted and in need of renewal or purification. But in the way they have elaborated this notion they are at opposite ends. On the Iranian side the ritual purification of the fire is maximized to the extent that it has even fully taken the place of renewal. In Vedic India, by contrast, purification remains a vague if not hollow phrase appended to the renewal theme—“and they also purify it.”<sup>12</sup> Or, as we have just seen, the notion is turned around, the sacrificer being not quite convincingly said to become purified through “the fire that had entered the waters.”

Still worse, the notion of renewal turns out to be no less inconsistent. The renewal the *punarādhēya* represents is, as we have seen, made out to be the sacrificer’s response to the fire’s aggressive claim to its rightful share in sacrifice. But to satisfy the fire’s claim it must first be terminated before receiving its share in the form of the *punarādhēya* sacrifice. The reason given for the fire’s termination, however, is the sacrificer’s misfortune during the period he maintained it after the first *ādhāna*. But then terminating the fire is clearly stated to be a sacrilege no less weighty than manslaughter, and this



again makes it necessary to perform the *punarādhya* as amends for the sin of terminating the fire.<sup>13</sup> The renewal theme disappears under a welter of ill-assorted explanations, some of which even contradict it. Renewal seems to come into its own only in the periodic *tanūhavīṃsi* sacrifice. This is what we have come to expect, sacrifice being the core of the fire cult. But here we run up against the paradox that it is exactly its sacrificial service of burning the oblation that has caused the fire's exhaustion and need for renewal. The fire is supposed to recuperate from sacrifice through sacrifice. The Vedic ritualists wisely refrained from following up this paradox. Instead, they silently dropped the *tanūhavīṃsi* as a periodic sacrifice and replaced it with the verbal *agnyupasthāna*, while transforming the equivalent *punarādhya* into an incidental remedy in case the old fire could somehow no longer be maintained.

The problem for the ritualists was that they had purposefully broken up the unremitting sacrificial cycle and made the *ādihāna* into a ritual that should once and for all establish the *śrauta* fire and make the householder a *śrauta* sacrificer. But the problem was compounded by the *śrauta* system of ritual that had marginalized both immolation and festive meal while exclusively emphasizing the abandonment of the oblation to destruction in the fire. The latter, we saw, was lacking in the original *odana* ritual, which did not burden the fire with the burnt oblation but only tended it with fuel and ghee libations. The Zoroastrian liturgy pursued this line to the ultimate consequence of finally freeing the cult fire of all servitude—as also happened in the Taoist liturgy, which restricted the fire to the otherwise essential incense burner. Vedic ritualism, however, maximized the opposite line of having the fire carry the brunt of its sacrificial worship.

In the meantime the notion of a periodic renewal of the fire has not gained in plausibility. Although it is obviously an ancient one, the notion does not appear to be of overriding importance. In Zoroastrianism it ceded its place to the ritual of purification. In Vedic ritual texts renewal, or rather rejuvenation, as well as purification is explicitly mentioned, but as we have seen, they are not consistently put into practice. The ritualists have no particular use for them, and where they still turn up in their considerations renewal and purification make for confusion rather than clarification. After all, these notions do not seem to be as self-evident as we are inclined to think. The regenerative, and even self-generating, capacity of fire has at all times been too well known for a need of renewal to be quite realistic. In fact, the Vedic texts are rather sparing in their use of this metaphor that does not derive so much from the actual practice of fire and its maintenance as it does from the experience of animal domestication. Man and cattle get exhausted, and so the same is expected from the fire, man's first domesticate. But the mystery of fire is its capacity of instant generation and prolif-

eration. It may even go on forever, as man and cattle will not. Hence the fire's connection with immortality.<sup>14</sup>

This can, of course, be expressed in terms of death and renewal, of old fire as against a new one. Such would be the case when a death has occurred. Thus it seems to have been the custom among the ancient Persians to extinguish the fire at the death of the ruler. In deference to this custom Alexander the Great is said to have given orders at the death of Darius III "that all inhabitants of Asia should carefully extinguish the fire that the Persians call sacred until he had completed the obsequies."<sup>15</sup> The ancient Iranian custom of extinguishing the fire on the death of the ruler and of his successor kindling a new fire—his reign dating from that day—is also known from later Parthian and Sasanian times.<sup>16</sup> We have already met similar interdicts in ancient Greece in case of a death in the house. In Vedic India too the domestic as well as the *śrauta* fires were extinguished at the death of the master of the house after having rendered their last service at his cremation.<sup>17</sup> In a similar vein Baudhāyana has a cow sacrifice in honor of the fathers (*upavasathagavī* or *gopitryajña*)—which may well represent an actual funerary sacrifice—precede the establishment of the *śrauta* fires.<sup>18</sup>

In her rich and valuable study of the *agnyādheya* Hertha Krick therefore viewed this ritual complex as a renewal and reconstruction, a *Feuerneueweihe*, involving lustration and cosmic regeneration that originally directly concerned the always-contested periodic changes of leadership, Agni being the divine *hotṛ* and leader, as the sacrificer was the human one.<sup>19</sup> Her point is well taken, and the matter of a periodic contest for leadership is certainly relevant as we will have occasion to discuss.<sup>20</sup> But the installation of a new fire after the death of the ruler or of the *paterfamilias* is a different matter from a yearly renewal. The two cases are to some extent capable of being conflated, as seems to be the case with Baudhāyana. But in itself the *agnyādheya* does not seem to be concerned with either the reinstallation of the fire after the demise of the incumbent or with renewal or rejuvenation in any real sense. Its first part, the *odana* feast, though clearly periodical, could, as we saw, only with considerable difficulty be twisted into the function of symbolically producing the new *śrauta* fire. Nor did the churning of the *gārhapatya* fire or the offerings to Agni's "bodies" (*tanūhaviṃśi*) make a convincing case for a renewal of the fire. It would seem that occasions calling for reinstallation of the fire—such as changes of leadership after the death of the incumbent or otherwise, as also in the case of resettlement elsewhere—were cast in the mold of the periodic sacrificial culmination of the fire cult rather than the other way around.

It appears therefore doubtful that the notion of the fire's renewal was indeed of such dominant importance. Such renewals would seem instead to be a special form of the general periodic pattern that governs the cult of the

fire and does not necessarily require setting up a new fire. In this respect it is significant that the extinguished fire of the deceased householder need not be replaced by an entirely new one; its place may also be taken by an already existing one, the successor's nuptial fire.<sup>21</sup> Similarly the fire of Baudhāyana's funerary sacrifice (the *gopitryajña*) preceding the *agnyādhya* is taken from the (descendant's) domestic hearth, which as such continues unaffected. The same is true of the *brāhmaudanika* fire, which is equally taken from the domestic fire and, as has been argued, may originally have been the sacrificial fire itself without a new one being produced (as became necessary as a consequence of the *grhya-śrauta* divide). And, anyway, the *brāhmaudanika*, instead of being extinguished, may be continued as the *dakṣiṇāgni*, the southern cooking fire, in the *śrauta* ritual. There is, then, little indication of an actual renewal of the fire in any real sense of replacing an old and terminated fire by a newly produced one.

What is loosely brought together under the general caption of "renewal" covers in fact two different situations. On the one hand there are occasions of a fire being installed or a new fireplace being established, as in the case of leadership or of settling out elsewhere. On the other hand we find a cyclical pattern of periodic communal high times focused on the cult of the fire. Both situations can be and frequently are associated with notions of cosmic regeneration in which the kindling of fire is a visible and tangible emblem of such regeneration. But in neither case is there an actual "renewal" of the fire as such. As our discussion of the fire drill brought out, its use made it possible to maintain the fiction of the fire's permanence, even if it is first extinguished or left to die down by itself, and so blurs the opposition of a "worn out" as against a renewed or rejuvenated fire. What counts is the fire drill's capacity to make the fire the exclusive property of its owner and to enable him to manage it, independent of the cooperation of others.<sup>22</sup>

In the same way the *agnyādhya* is neither a renewal nor a replacement. The ritualists meant it to be the creation of a fire of an entirely different nature, namely, a *śrauta* fire set apart from the continuing domestic hearth, as well as from all other fires, whether *śrauta* or *grhya*. Nor does the *agnyādhya* derive from renewal or replacement; instead, as we will see, it comes from the repeated kindling of the same "old" fire by its mobile owner on his peregrinations.

## 4.2

If renewal and the opposition of old and new fire do not seem to have the pivotal importance we are inclined to take for granted, there can be no doubt about the cyclic periodicity of the fire cult. This involves a ritual paradigm that brings into play dimensions other than only renewal. It can perhaps best be described in terms of interlocking sets of oppositions—

controlled and wild fire, integration and dispersal, manifest presence and disappearance, permanence and intermittence, stability and mobility. To be sure, old as against new fire can with comparative ease find a place in this paradigm, but it is not its most conspicuous dimension. The pivotal point is the fire's notorious unreliability. In mythological terms this is the theme of Agni's flight or withdrawal as against his retrieval and reinstatement, while the dangerous side of the fire's unreliability is expressed in Agni's wild Rudra manifestation threatening the sacrificer, his household, and cattle that, like Agni's withdrawal, is a stereotype of ritualistic exposition. The interlocking sets of oppositions are acted out in the ritual paradigm so as to control the fire's dangerous unreliability and submit it to an absolute order. This, rather than worship per se, is the purpose of the fire cult.

We already met the motif of Agni's dispersal and reintegration in connection with his three "bodies" that have to be brought together in the *tanūhaviṃṣi* sacrifice. "By preparing these offerings one brings together (*sambharati*) those bodies, so [the fire] is set up provided with body, with fiery glow."<sup>23</sup> Incidentally, we notice here also the easy intertwining of Agni's reintegration with the motif of the fire's renewal or rejuvenation equally connected with the *tanūhaviṃṣi*. In a more tangible way the bringing together of the dispersed fire is realized by collecting the various kinds of soil that go into the earth mounds of the fire hearths (the so-called earth *sambhāras*) as well as the various kinds of fuel wood (the wood *sambhāras*).<sup>24</sup> Another way is the "collection" of three *sambhāras* that are deposited in the center or "navel" (*nābhi*) of the *āhavanīya* altar, at the east end of the *mahāvedi*, the extended place of sacrifice. These three items—tuft of hair between the horns of a ram, wood of the pūtudru tree, and a fragrant kind of reed—are the places where Agni successively passed three nights on his flight.<sup>25</sup> By putting together the three *sambhāras* on the seat of the fire "one brings Agni together." The most telling way of "collecting" the fire is to be found in the construction of the prestigious brick altar (*agnicayana*). A solemn procession goes out to collect from a loam pit the clay for the bricks. When challenged on the way, they should answer: "We are going, like the Angiras [fire priests], after Agni hidden in the mud (*purīṣya*)."<sup>26</sup> The fired bricks, put together in five layers in the more or less schematized shape of a bird, form the reintegrated body of Agni. But the climax of the fire's reintegration is, of course, when it blazes forth on its hearth. Thus, the offering by which Agni's third "body" is regained—his pure or *śuci* form that had entered the sun on his withdrawal into dispersion—brings about manifestation (*āvīrbhūti*), victory shouts (*ghoṣa*), fame (*śloka*), and luster (*ruc*). "When at the ghee being poured in the fire the flame flares up like gold, that is that body of his with which he entered the sun."<sup>27</sup>

While Vedic ritualism has the fire brought together from its dispersed state under the guise of earth or clay and, more rationally, of fuel, the Zo-

roastrian liturgy realizes this in a direct way by collecting and purifying live fires that are then integrated to form the *Ātash Bahrām*. For all their obvious differences the two procedures would seem to be analogous and to derive from a common origin. Perhaps an indication of such common origin is found in Agni's epithet *purīṣya*, hidden or residing in *purīṣa*. Meaning and etymology of this word are not fully clear but generally turn on fertile soil or a water source and, in later texts, dung, manure.<sup>28</sup> Fertile soil and water source would perfectly fit the loam pit where Agni *purīṣya* is to be retrieved. But *purīṣa* is also associated with ashes.<sup>29</sup> If we further consider that the *āvasathya* or "residential" fire, the fifth of the *śrauta* fires but also simply the domestic hearth, is in one passage given the name *asat pāmsava*, "the not-being dusty one," and said to be the place where the ashes are deposited—in other words an ash altar—it seems not unlikely that Agni *purīṣya* is a purposely enigmatic expression for the domestic fire "hidden" or smoldering in its ashbed. If so, "going after Agni *purīṣya*" might then mean going out to take away someone else's domestic fire—which as we will see was indeed a standard practice for obtaining fire. But apart from the implications of such practices that will concern us later on it would suggest that the Vedic way of "collecting the fire" may, like its Zoroastrian counterpart, have referred to obtaining live fire (and what is needed to maintain it).

But if the earth *sambhāras* are originally derived from live fires, or at least from substances directly connected with fire such as ashes, why the radical shift to earth or clay? The answer would seem to lie in the rigid individualization of the fire that was exclusively linked, even identified, with the "soul," the *ātman*, of the sacrificer. Joining different fires is also in the Zoroastrian fire cult a moot point.<sup>31</sup> No strong imagination is needed to understand why this is so. Putting fires together may well produce an uncontrollable conflagration. Scrupulously keeping fires apart would seem to be originally a matter of fire control, which was lifted out of its real-life context and transferred to the ritual scene. But while Zoroastrianism developed an elaborate procedure of purifying and integrating fires under strict ritual control, the equally strict individualization achieved by Vedic ritualism gave a particularly sharp edge to their being put together.

Yet the uniting of personal fires does occur in Vedic ritual. This is the case when a group of sacrificers band together for a longer period—minimally twelve days but more often stretching over months and even years—to perform a *sattra*, a sacrificial soma "session" in which the participants are at the same time sacrificer and officiating priest. Such *sattrins* must bring together their fires on the *gārhapatya* hearth of their leader. After the conclusion of the *sattra* the united fire is then divided up again among the participants.<sup>32</sup> In this way each participant singly identifies with the band of *sattrins* and its leader. But normally the sacrificer's fire should on no ac-

count come into contact with another fire; nor should the *śrauta* fires of the same sacrificer be mixed.

Such a mishap—for instance, when somebody passes with his fires between the sacrificer's *gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya*—calls for a compensatory *ṛṣṭi*.<sup>33</sup> Or again, “if one's sacrificial fires [when disposed on their separate hearths] become mixed (*samsrjyante*) with other fires, a pure (*medhya*) body is mixed with an impure one; he should prepare [as a compensatory rite] a cake baked on eight potsherds for Agni Vivici (“Separator”); [thereby] he disentangles the pure from the impure body.”<sup>34</sup> It should be noted that “pure,” or, more correctly, “fit for sacrifice,” simply means the sacrificer's own individual fire. There is no other specification of the fire's fitness, nor is the unfitness of the other fires with which it might become mixed in any way clarified. The impurity is not so much an attribute of the other fire but rather of the mixing as such, whatever the nature of the other fire. The latter may as well be another duly-founded sacrificial fire, either the sacrificer's or someone else's. Such, for instance, is the case of the fire kept in a pot (*ukhā*) during the year preceding the building of the brick altar. When the altar is ready (as well as the other simpler brick hearths), the *ukhā* fire is united with the fire on the *gārhapatya* stand. But this act has to be accompanied by mantras that should bring about their harmony. For “these two [fires], the one [that was there] before and the one in the *ukhā* are hostile to each other.”<sup>35</sup>

So the practice of uniting different fires, though critical, was well known in Vedic India, as it was in Iran. It fits in well with the mythological notion of regaining the hidden and dispersed fire to concentrate it on the hearth. But we have seen that the Vedic ritualists had special reasons to prefer the collection and mixing of the earth *sambhāras* rather than uniting actual fires. By focusing the attention on the altars the problem of uniting live fires—or materials directly related to fire such as smoldering ashes—was avoided.

But the notion of collecting and concentrating as against dispersal is basic to the sacrificial cult of the fire. Given the practical identity of sacrifice with the cult of the fire it is not surprising that sacrifice, no less than fire, has to be “collected.” In a way “bringing together” sacrifice is even more realistic, because it refers not just to the implements of the cult but primarily to the goods offered in sacrifice. Now “collecting” the fire is indeed practically synonymous with bringing together the goods of sacrifice—specifically cattle, the primary and emblematic form of wealth. Thus, for instance, the sprinkling of water on the site of the hearth is viewed as the “bringing together” of food for both sacrifice and fire—water being equated with food, for “when water comes to this world food is produced here,” as the Śatapatha realistically explains.<sup>36</sup> So it would even be possible to forego the collection of the *sambhāras* for the hearths—as indeed is an opinion re-

corded though not accepted by the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa—as long as the goods for sacrifice are being assembled.<sup>37</sup> The generally held doctrine, however, is that the fire hearth *sambhāras* do have to be collected together with the goods of sacrifice. The periodic rhythm of the fire's dispersal and reintegration, disappearance and manifestation, was kept being ritually enacted and controlled.

### 4.3

But if the rhythm of the fire's alternating phases is to be controlled it must not only be retrieved and reintegrated. It must also be dispersed again under full ritual control—as the goods of sacrifice also have to be dispersed in the form of the food and gifts that are distributed immediately after the main offerings concluded by the “sacrifice-perfecting” (*svīṣṭakṛt*) offering in the fire.<sup>38</sup>

This is well illustrated by an extra ghee libation after the “full-ladle” libation (*pūrṇāhuti*, “leaving none remaining in the offering ladle”) after the establishment of the *śrauta* fires. While the mantra accompanying the *pūrṇāhuti* celebrates the concentrated sevenfold Agni—“Seven fuel logs you have, o Agni, seven tongues, seven seers, seven beloved abodes (*dhāman*), sevenfold the seven *hotṛ* functions worship you, fill the seven birth places with ghee”—the mantra at the following libation sends the fires off again: “The fires that have come together from heaven, from the earth, milking nourishment and strength, those should give wealth to this one here [i.e., the sacrificer]; then, worshipped [and] satisfied, having received a share in the libation, you should go again, each to his own place.”<sup>39</sup>

The ritual realization of the fire's dispersion, not as a wildfire or hidden but harnessed to the service of the human and divine world, is its division over the three or five hearths on the place of sacrifice, which, in accordance with the fire's “being taken apart,” is also known as *vihāra*, “the men take the fire separately to each house,” as the Ṛgveda has it.<sup>40</sup> This would seem to be the original background of both the triad and the pentad of the *śrauta* fires, the numbers three and five being well-known numerical schemes for the conceptual organization of the world. Thus we have the three spaces of earth, air, and haven, or the “five peoples” (*pañca janāḥ*), while sacrifice is generally held to be “fivefold.” The fire, then, starting from the *gārhapatya* must be divided, or as the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā puts it, a fire that is not divided (*avibhakta*) is not established (*anāhita*).<sup>41</sup> We already met a particular realization of this idea in the so-called *ratnīnām havīṃṣi* of the royal consecration (*rājasūya*).<sup>42</sup> The royal sacrificer takes his fire to the place of each of the “jewel bearers” (*ratnin*), or functionaries, in turn and lays out a *vihāra* where he performs a sacrifice. Although devoid of this public and collectivist aspect the setting up of the *vihāra* with its five hearths represents

a similar pattern of carrying the fire from a central hearth, the *gārhapatya*, to the other fireplaces. The essential point, however, is strict ritual control, for at the back of the fire's solemn installation there always lurks the danger of its going out of control. Thus, the creator god Prajāpati, Lord of Creatures, on creating the fire was afraid that it would burn him and therefore split its power (*mahiman*) three ways. "In that the fire is triply installed, [the sacrificer] splits up its power in three ways, for appeasement [of the fire], for not being burnt."<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, once divided, the separately installed fires should, as already mentioned, be kept separate, a compensatory sacrifice being needed if they get somehow mixed. Controlled separation is ritualistically guaranteed by applying the *vibhaktis*, the "divisions," to the verses addressed to the deities of the fore offerings (*prayāja*). This is a pun on the word *vibhakti*, which is also the technical term for "case ending." This provided the ritualists with the means to separate the fires by the simple but unexpected expedient of adding the word *agni*, each time with another case ending, to the successive verses of the *prayājas*. Or as the Kāthaka explains in an optimistic vein, "because they take here the fire manifoldly apart [and] because it has flourished [in that way], therefore only Agni, no other god, receives so many *vibhaktis*." But the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, less optimistically, warns against the danger of being burned, when approaching the undivided Agni, and therefore prescribes the *vibhaktis*.<sup>44</sup> The point is formal control by ratiocinative means, be they pragmatic or grammatical—preferably both.

The ritualistic *vibhakti* theme bears out the dual paradigm of the fire's integration and dispersal. This paradigm also covers the whole of the sacrificial ritual. At the beginning of each sacrifice—even of the twice-daily milk offering (*agnihotra*)—the fires have to be taken out of the *gārhapatya*. After the conclusion of the ritual they are left to grow cold. The fire is then concentrated again on the single primary hearth where it should be kept permanently burning like its Iranian counterpart. Only the so-called *gataśrī*, the well-to-do magnate, should keep all his *śrauta* fires burning, an onerous obligation requiring the ample resources that only a magnate has at his disposal.

The distribution of the fire over the different hearths at the start of the sacrificial proceedings effectively exploits the double theme of the fire's dispersal and concentration. Having been collected from various sources it is concentrated in one place and dispersed again. But the drive for ritual control of the fire brought about a reversal of the theme. The fire is no longer allowed to withdraw into dispersal or go into hiding. On the contrary, when distributed over the different hearths, it is brought to maximum manifestation and activity. And even when it is "unyoked"—like a draught animal—from its sacrificial service at the conclusion of the sacrifice, it is kept from "going out"—the term for the fire going out is a compound of the



verb *gacchati*, “to go (away)” —but is to stay burning on the *gārhapatya* hearth.

Understandably, the thrust of ritualistic control is toward stability and permanence, as is evident from the general emphasis on “firm foundations” (*pratiṣṭhā*). Still the phases of the fire’s being in abeyance or even being invisible are also ritually enacted by periodic intermissions. When discussing the notion of the fire’s renewal as a special form of the general alternating pattern we noticed that at various points periods of interdict, lasting up to a year, are prescribed. First there is an intermission between the *brahmaudana* and the actual setting up of the *śrauta* fires. During this period, which is variously given as one year, twelve days, three days, two days, and one day, the sacrificer should not eat meat, have no sexual intercourse, and not leave on a journey.<sup>45</sup> Moreover the *brāhmaudanika* fire should be kept burning—like the domestic fire with which it is in fact identical—but no fire should be taken from his house nor other fire brought to it.<sup>46</sup> Even though the *brāhmaudanika* is to be kept going, its use is restricted so as to be practically in abeyance. Next we find a similar intermission between the *ādhāna* proper and the *tanūhavīṃśi* sacrifices.<sup>47</sup> We have already seen that the animal sacrifice falls into the same place and may originally have been identical with them. Finally, between the *ādhāna* and the *punarādhēya* there equally is an intermission, lasting a year at the most after the last *īṣṭi*, that marks abandonment of the first fire.<sup>48</sup> All these sacrifices, *tanūhavīṃśi*, animal sacrifice, and *punarādhēya*, fall into the same slot of the cyclically alternating pattern of sacrifices and intervals. And as will become clear further on, the same pattern underlies the soma ritual.

During the intervals the fire is in abeyance or even, as illustrated by the *punarādhēya*, actually discarded. That in this case it is intended to send off the fire comes out clearly when the last *īṣṭi* before the first fire is abandoned is likened to the provisions prepared for someone who goes on a journey to distant people.<sup>49</sup> At the Agni *īṣṭi* of the *punarādhēya* itself the notion of finding the fire in its hiding place is given expression by muttering *sotto voce* (*upāṃśu*) the offering verses up to the last offering. “It is as if one who has found a treasure keeps it secret.” Only at the last offering, the *svīṣṭakṛt* offering, he comes out into the open with the treasure by reciting the offering verse loudly (*uccaiḥ*). “It is as if someone who has found a treasure wants to proclaim it.”<sup>50</sup> The “as if,” is, however, significant. The fire’s hiding and retrieval are in fact ritually under control.

#### 4.4

Here the permanent-intermittent, manifest-hidden theme shades imperceptibly into that of the fire’s stability as against its mobility. The permanent static fire is, of course, the more conspicuous and better known one, espe-

cially the ancient Iranian cult fire “enthroned” in its sanctuary. Similarly the Greek cities permanently maintained a fire on the “state hearth” in the *prytaneion*, while Rome cultivated its permanent fire in the Vesta temple. It is the domestic fire elevated to be the emblem of the cultic and political community. This corresponds perfectly with the Vedic rules prescribing the permanent maintenance of the domestic fire as well as of its *śrauta* counterpart, the *gārhapatya*. However, as we have seen the *grhya* and the *śrauta* fire lack the markedly public character that is a conspicuous feature in Iran as well as in Greece and Rome. Or rather, the Vedic cult fire has been depleted of its public potential. Accordingly, there were no fixed sanctuaries where the fire was to be permanently maintained, apart from the private domestic hearth. The development of such fixed public cult establishments would, moreover, require a certain degree of sedentarization and relatively stable power centers. Such seems to have been the case in Iran, especially since the imperial deployment of the Achaemenid era, probably induced by neighboring Mesopotamia and the material benefits as well as the cultural influences deriving from this proximity. In a different way, conditions favorable to the development of permanent cult centers were brought about by the rise of the *polis* and the Mediterranean city-states in general.

In Vedic India by contrast—and, in fact, until much later—society appears to have been marked by a high degree of mobility. The Indo-Aryans at least seem to have been all but constantly on the move as may be expected of cattle-loving warriors for whom the cow as well as the chariot are the epitome of wealth and prestige. Their ideal is the gods who, we are told, “drove about on wheels, while their opponents, the asuras, sat at home in their halls (*śālā*).”<sup>51</sup> Sedentary life is despised. “Some are intent on *kṣema* [the security of settled life], others on *yoga* [the yoking of the draught animals to start out again]. Therefore the one moving about (*yāyāvāra*) lords it over the settled one (*kṣemya*), he sets himself over the settled one (*adhya-vasyati*).”<sup>52</sup> In the same strain we hear of the Kuru-Pañcālas yearly setting out in the cool season toward the east on a ransom and tribute-levying expedition and returning at the end of the hot season.<sup>53</sup> No less significant is the word *grāma*, which became in the later Vedic texts the word for village settlement but in the older passages unambiguously refers to a trekking warrior band.<sup>54</sup> This was certainly not a peaceful society but it would be a mistake to view the regular booty expeditions exclusively in terms of plunder. Rather the overall aim seems to have been the expansion of settlement and arable area. Thus we are told, in a simile, of the king giving out rights on landed property in agreement with the clan folk (*viśā samvidāna*). This may involve the ejection of previous settlers, as this text tells us, but it is not likely that this was regular practice, if only because land without labor would be as good as useless.<sup>55</sup> Rather than eject them it will have been a matter of obtaining superior (protection) rights, of being set over the al-

ready settled *kṣemya* so as to share in the proceeds, as is the *yāyāvāra*'s prerogative.

For our purpose the interesting point is that the simile of the king giving out landed rights refers to the sacrificer's settling down for the soma sacrifice for which he needs the king's consent. Now the site of the soma sacrifice is regularly outside the settled area, in the wilderness (*araṇya*), which is "the king's" conquest (*rājñām . . . abhijitam*).<sup>56</sup> But there is only one way to conquer the jungle, and that is to have it cleared, settled, and turned into arable land. What the simile implies is that the sacrificial fire cult is tantamount to settling the wild. This is exactly what is suggested by the legendary Māthava Videgha, or Mādhava of Videha, whom we have already met.<sup>57</sup> When he was standing at the Sarasvatī River, the fire he held in himself was teased out of his mouth by the mention of ghee in the verses for kindling the sacrificial fire. It fell on the earth and rolled on and on eastward until it was stopped by the Sadānīrā River, which never fell dry (and therefore could not be passed by the fire). "That one the brahmins did not cross in former times, thinking, 'it has not been burnt over by Agni Vaiśvānara' . . . At that time it was quite uncultivated (*akṣetratara*) and waterlogged (*srāvītara*), because it had not been tasted by Agni Vaiśvānara. Nowadays, however, it is cultivated, for the brahmins have caused [Agni] to taste it through sacrifices." Interestingly, it was just such a riverine jungle area where the fire-worshipping Kassapa and his band of brahmin followers were settled before they were visited and converted by the Buddha.<sup>58</sup> Here, it would seem, we have a primitive example of a permanent center of the fire cult. Its periodic festival, we learn, drew people from all of eastern India (Magadha and Anga).<sup>59</sup> But the conversion of Kassapa and his followers by the Buddha put an end to it. Giving up the fire and throwing away the necessities for the cult they started out again on an itinerant life, this time as followers of the Buddha.

It was, then, a highly mobile world, and so was its fire. To place in proper perspective the consequences for the fire cult of ancient India's striking mobility it will be necessary first to set out in more detail the dual pattern of the fire's static permanence as against its dynamic mobility. Both aspects are fully exploited, as are the aspects, discussed above, of its concentration and dispersal or manifestation and disappearance. To start with the fire's permanence there must always be a hut or chamber where the fire is sufficiently protected to keep burning when properly tended. Thus, for instance, the Kassapa of the Buddha story maintained his fire in a special "fire house" (*aggvāgāra*) where the Buddha, to the dismay of his host, desired to pass the night. The most obvious instance is, of course, the permanent domestic fire, safely embedded and protected by the household. Movable fire, in the form of glowing embers or a burning log, could be taken from there to set up a fire elsewhere, for instance, for the *brahmaudana* ceremony. That

this was a regular practice is shown by the exception made during an interdict period when no fire is to be taken from or to the house.<sup>60</sup> Carrying fire over a long distance in an earthenware pot with a deep bed of ashes, such as the *ukhā* in which the fire is carried during the year preceding the building of the brick altar (*agnicayana*), is another well-known method, still in use with present-day nomads. And, of course, there is the fire drill that saves one the cumbersome work of tending the fire.

But the dual pattern finds its fullest systematic elaboration in the *śrauta* ritual of the animal and soma sacrifices. The emplacement of these *śrauta* sacrifices consists of two parts. At the western side there is the *śālā*, the “hall,” or *prācīnavamśa*, named after its roof beam pointing east—in practice no more than an oblong wooden shed with a thatched roof. Since this *śālā* also serves for the twice-daily *agnihotra* and the vegetal *iṣṭi* of the full and new moon, it also contains the full complement of the *dakṣiṇāgni* and *āhavanīya* hearths. But it is essentially the abode of the *gārhapatya*, the *śrauta* double of the permanent domestic fire. For the *śrauta* ritual of the animal and soma sacrifices, however, fire is taken from the *āhavanīya* hearth, situated near the eastern entrance of the *śālā*, and ceremonially taken outside to the east, to the uncovered space where the *mahāvedi*, like the *vedi* of trapezoid form, has been measured out. There, at its eastern end, is the *uttaravedi*, the mound where the new *āhavanīya* will eventually be installed to receive the offerings. The old *āhavanīya* in the *śālā*, now called *śālāmu-khīya*, “of the *śālā* opening,” takes over the function of the *gārhapatya*. So there is the permanent fire in its covered abode (the *śālā*) as against the temporary fire moved out into the open and installed on its uncovered altar. This scheme closely recalls the practice in ancient Greece, where we also meet a fire house or temple holding a permanent fire. To the east of the temple—in the same position as the *uttaravedi* hearth *vis-à-vis* the *śālā*—stands the sacrificial altar on which fire taken from the temple is ceremonially installed for the duration of the sacrifice.<sup>61</sup> In this connection it is also of interest that the *gārhapatya*, like the hearth of Vesta in Rome, is round, while the square *āhavanīya* corresponds to the equally square Roman and Greek altars.<sup>62</sup>

The Zoroastrian cult gives prominence to permanence and immobility of the fire. It is, of course, possible to transport the consecrated fire—the Indian Parsis have done so a number of times even in the case of their first and, for several centuries only, Bahrām fire—but the care and precautions required are all but prohibitive.<sup>63</sup> Such moves, however, are not for the purpose of the liturgy. The *Ātash Bahrām*—or, for that matter, the main fire of a temple, even of a lesser rank—has no liturgical function apart from being tended by the priests who alone have access to it. Nor can embers be taken from it to kindle the fire for the performance of the liturgy. The fire used for the liturgy, of a lower degree and kept out of sight of the main fire,

is completely separate and must be maintained independently. In other words, the link between the two fires that we notice elsewhere and that probably existed originally also in the Iranian case was broken—as in another way the Vedic *gārhapatya* was rigorously set apart from the domestic fire—with the result that the two had to be kept separately burning all the time.<sup>64</sup> But thereby the dual pattern becomes even more recognizable. We have, moreover, already noticed the original linkage in the old usage practiced by Parsi priests, when there was still only one proper fire temple, to take fire from the priest's own domestic hearth to the place of worship (the *dar-i mihr*) for the performance of the liturgy and carry it back again afterward.<sup>65</sup> In this connection mention may also be made of the fire, presumably taken from the royal (household) fire, that the Achaemenid rulers carried as a palladium before their armies, a practice also reported of Persian magnates.<sup>66</sup> But although the cult fire was at all times capable of being transported the Iranian evidence is heavily weighted in favor of immobility of both the main and the liturgical fire in the fire temple.

#### 4.5

When compared with the rise of the Iranian fire temple the prominence that the Vedic fire cult gives to mobility and impermanence is striking. For all the prestige and complexity of the *śrauta* ritual its place of sacrifice is only a temporary installation and not meant to outlast a single sacrifice after which it is abandoned. Only the sacrificial post (*yūpa*) is left as a mark. But being of wood it will not endure either. Even if the ritual involves a brick-built altar, which is vastly more durable than the earth mounds normally serving as fire hearths, the carefully constructed altar is only used once.

The pattern of the *śālā* housing the *gārhapatya*, on the one hand, and of the open *mahāvedi* to the east of the *śālā*, on the other, mirrors a similar arrangement we met in ancient Greece. But it is significant that carrying the fire and the soma to their place on the *mahāvedi* (*agnīśomapranayana*) is pictured as a wide-ranging, conquering progress.<sup>67</sup> “The people go on conquering the fields from the West to the East,” just like the legendary fire of Mādhava Videha or, more realistically, the transhumance and ransom-taking eastern circuit of the Kuru-Pāñcālas.<sup>68</sup> Fittingly the *mahāvedi* contains a special shed, the *havirdhānamandapa*, immediately to the west of the oblatinal hearth for putting up two carts on one of which the soma stalks will be deposited. Although bringing up the two carts precedes the procession with fire and soma stalks, the point is clear.<sup>69</sup> The *mahāvedi* is a temporary encampment that will be left again after completing the soma sacrifice. And indeed, at the end of the soma ritual proper, a cow dedicated to Mitra and Varuṇa is sacrificed, and finally the fires are taken up in the fire drill to settle elsewhere for, again, another sacrifice, the “breaking-up” *iṣṭi*.

In fact, the basic paradigm of the soma ritual epitomizes a circuit of settling down (*adhyavasāna*) and breaking up again (*udavasāna*, *prayāna*). First the sacrificer settles down at the place of sacrifice—in this instance the *śālā*, the *mahāvedi* being arranged later—and sets up the fires by means of the *araṇis*.<sup>70</sup> According to the standard ritual he should undertake the consecration (*dikṣā*) followed by a (vegetal) sacrifice (*dikṣanīyā-īsti*) and stay there. However, after his consecration, for reasons that are not quite made clear, he may take up the fires in his *araṇis* and set out again—with the carts mentioned above and with a chariot as well—to the actual place of sacrifice.<sup>71</sup> The original meaning is clear though. He goes out to collect the goods for sacrifice—an activity reduced by the standard ritual to the anodyne format of sending out messengers to collect them for him.<sup>72</sup> Having arrived at the place of sacrifice, he again churns and sets up the fires. So not only is there a setting out to the *śālā*, but there may also occur a second setting out to the actual place of sacrifice that, apart from the obligatory *śālā*, will also comprise the *mahāvedi* for the soma ritual. In this way we can understand that the carrying of fire and soma to their destination on the *mahāvedi* is represented as a full-fledged campaign—and a campaign of conquest at that.

As if this were not yet sufficient to satisfy anybody's wanderlust, there still is another expedition after the *dikṣā*—according to the standard ritual on the first of the so-called *upasad* days that take up the time between the *dikṣā* and the soma sacrifice. This expedition serves to obtain the soma stalks that later, at the soma sacrifice, will provide the cultic beverage—the aquatic food of life matching the fire. The standard ritual represents the acquisition of the soma as an elaborately ritualized bargaining scene in which the soma is bartered for a cow. There are strong indications, though, that the bargaining, itself a kind of contest, is not a perfectly peaceful negotiation. When the barter sale is completed, the soma seller is beaten. Even more telling is the rite concerning the cow offered as the price. When the cow is led up, the print of its seventh step is sprinkled with ghee and the ghee-soaked earth cut out and divided over the fire hearths while the sacrificer's wife equally receives part of it.<sup>73</sup> It is somewhat surprising that the mantra accompanying the cutting out of the ghee-soaked hoofprint runs: "Here I cut the neck of the demon; the one who hates us and whom we hate, his neck I cut." The cow is the live representative of *Idā*, the goddess of the sacrificial meal, "whose foot drips with ghee" (*ghṛtapadī*), while the ghee-soaked print is the primordial altar.<sup>74</sup> Taken together these features—bargaining, beating, *Idā* cow, her footprint, the severed head—suggest the scenario of a sacrificial contest in which the soma must be won.

The rather confusing cumulation of expeditions represents, it would seem, the disassembled aspects of a single phase, namely, the *dikṣita*'s setting out to collect the goods required for sacrifice. Having successfully com-

pleted the acquisitive phase he settles down on the place of sacrifice to spend the goods he has collected. The standard paradigm of the soma ritual, however, recognizes only two fixed sites, the *śālā* and the *mahāvedi*. The movements to acquire the goods for sacrifice—the sending out of messengers and the *dikṣita*'s own optional journey—are reduced to near insignificance. Only the bargaining for the soma is given high profile. But although the use of a cart to bring the acquired soma to the *śālā* suggests a substantial journey, this aspect is passed over in silence. Apparently the ritualists intended to compress the whole action—including the symbolic conquering progress two days later from the *śālā* to the main fireplace on the *mahāvedi*—within the limited space of the single place of sacrifice formed by *śālā* and *mahāvedi*.<sup>75</sup>

Although in the standard ritual these two sites are invariably contiguous, forming together the single place of sacrifice, two different conceptions seem to underly this unified complex. On the one hand the *śālā* with the contiguous *mahāvedi* suggests the fixed residence and fire house with its open space for the sacrificial altar. This seems to survive at least partly in the animal sacrifice with its simpler *mahāvedi*. In this case no carts are involved in the move to the *mahāvedi*.<sup>76</sup> In the soma ritual, however, the *mahāvedi* is a far more elaborate affair. Apart from the shed where the two carts are put (*havirdhāna-maṇḍapa*) at the back of the oblatinal hearth, there are the *agnīdhriya* and the *mārjālīya* or cleansing hut on the northern and southern boundaries, each with its own fire hearth, and, in between these two huts, the *sadas* where the *dhisṇīya* hearths are located and where the soma is drunk. All of this is lacking in the animal sacrifice. What is significant though is that the latter does not have its own fire house, the *agnīdhriya* shed. The soma *mahāvedi* would seem to continue the tradition of an independent temporary emplacement at a considerable distance, somewhere out in the wilderness.<sup>77</sup> Otherwise it would be hard to explain the presence of the two soma carts solemnly driven to their shed on the *mahāvedi*—an act that, given the limited space, looks distinctly odd if not somewhat comical. Significantly the procession with the carts is disconnected from the equally solemn carrying of fire and soma to the *mahāvedi*, the latter act being performed on foot, as is appropriate to a contiguous altar space. The two separate moves—the one with carts, the other on foot—point to the fusion of two different conceptions in favor of a single place of sacrifice, immobile but abandoned *in toto* after the ritual's completion. Even the *śālā*, potentially a permanent installation, was drawn into the temporary scheme of the *devayajana*, each time set up and abandoned after completion of the ritual.

The temporary nature of the place of sacrifice fits in with the general mobility and, more specifically, of the fire and its *vihāra*. This is well illustrated by the so-called *yātsattras* or “moving sessions” on which the ritual

texts give fairly detailed information.<sup>78</sup> It is an eastward march along the river Sarasvatī or its tributary the Dr̥ṣadvatī ending at the Yamunā (Jamna) River, and so located in the area between the Indus and Ganges basins. It was in that area too that Mādhava of Videha's fire started its legendary progress to the Sadānīrā in the East. The eastward march is marked by moving the *gārhapatya* each day the distance of a *śamyā* throw—a wooden pin, used inter alia as a marker when measuring out the place of sacrifice—further east where a new *vihāra* is set up. To that end the *havirdhāna* shed for the carts, the *sadas*, and the *āgnīdhra* shed, are provided with wheels so as to be moved along, while the lower end of the sacrificial pole (*yūpa*) is mortar shaped to facilitate its being dragged each day along the ground to its new site. Typically it is the *mahāvedi* that is being relocated each time, not the *śālā*—the *gārhapatya* being the *śālāmukhīya* hearth, not the original one deep inside the *śālā*.<sup>79</sup> To round out the picture it should also be mentioned that the *yātsattrins* take with them a herd of a hundred cows and a bull with the aim of having them multiply to the mythic number of a thousand. In reality the *yātsattra* reflects the transhumance circuit with fire and cattle. Its sacral aspect has been lifted out of its natural context and ritualistically translated into a daily moving sacrificial ritual that completely fills out the intervals between encampments.

The *yātsattras* cannot be viewed as a special or exceptional case. Their pattern is not restricted to this special case but occurs equally in other cases. Thus we find in the sequence of sacrifices that form the *rājasūya* the ten *samsr̥p* offerings that mark the daily stages between the soma feast of the unction (*abhiṣecanīya*) and the great soma drinking feast of the *daśapeya*.<sup>80</sup> Equally forming part of the *rājasūya* are the twelve “yoking offerings” (*prajujāṁ havīṁsi*) that reflect the yearly transhumance and ransoming circuit of the Kuru-Pāñcalas of old and that also form the stages between two major sacrifices.<sup>81</sup>

It is this mobile pattern that is preserved, in telescoped form and drawn together within the confines of the single *devayajana*, by the basic paradigm of the soma ritual, the *agnistoma*.

#### 4.6

The mobility that underlies the soma ritual can also be observed in the *agnyādheya*. There too we notice a setting out, first to the place where the fire for cooking the *brahmaudana* is set up. As we saw this may even signify the resettlement of the entire household. But then there is again a move, albeit miniaturized, from the *brāhmaudanika* hearth to the *gārhapatya*, to the east of the former. As in the case of the soma ritual the fire for the *gārhapateya* is drilled by means of the *araṇis*. Then the *vihāra* is arranged by dividing the fire over the other hearths. The interesting feature is, how-



ever, that the carrying of fire from the *gārhapatya* to the *āhavanīya* is unmistakably made out to be a victorious conquering progress. Although the distance to be covered is no more than thirty-six steps, the fire is accompanied at the left or north side by a horse while a chariot wheel is rolled in the same eastward direction on the south side. We only need to put this disassembled array of fire, horse, and wheel together again to see what was meant. The original intention becomes, moreover, perfectly clear when we notice that the horse is made to step on the site of the *āhavanīya* while the verse “He has trampled under foot all foes . . .” is uttered.<sup>82</sup>

The short standard distance between *gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya* is, of course, wholly inadequate for such a procession. As we already saw the eastward expedition has been compressed within the narrow confines of the *vihāra*. As Hertha Krick has already remarked two schemes are involved.<sup>83</sup> On the one hand there is the pentadic scheme with center and four outward directions. On the other hand we notice a linear arrangement. In the soma ritual we can recognize the first scheme in the configuration of *gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya* at the west and east sides, with *mārjālīya* and *āgnīdhriya* occupying the southern and northern ends. The *dhīṣṇya* hearth of the *hotṛ*—originally the sacrificer—forms the center.<sup>84</sup> The lineal scheme is clearly expressed in the explanation of the mantras known as the “strides of the [cosmic] Virāj [cow]”—a near relative of Aditi and Idā—forming part of the verbal worship of the fire.<sup>85</sup> Although there is no connection between the content of the mantras and the strides of the cosmic cow, the former are said to represent the cow striding out on being created, or rather released out of Prajāpati, toward the east in a straight line, each stride being one of the five fire hearths.<sup>86</sup> This is, of course, at variance with the place of the *anvāhāryapacana* to the south of the eastward running line. If, however, we take into account the identity of the southern fire with the *brāhmaudanika* situated west of the *gārhapatya* we get indeed a straight line running from the west to the east, the *sabhya* and *āvasathya* fires being conventionally placed on the same line, east of the *āhavanīya*.<sup>87</sup>

In this connection it should also be mentioned that the *āhavanīya* hearth occasionally takes over the function of the *gārhapatya*. It does so regularly as the *sālāmukhiya* when the *mahāvedi* is set up for the animal or the soma sacrifice, while in the case of the *samsṛp* offerings the *āhavanīya* of the previous day is the *gārhapatya* of the next.<sup>88</sup> In the same vein we often hear of the “forward fire,” the *pūrvāgni*. It invariably refers to the mobile fire carried eastward, and the horse that accompanies the fire to the *āhavanīya* is called *pūrvavāh*, “carrying [the fire] eastward.” In connection with the cattle raid that is part of the *rājasūya* the *pūrvāgni* is driven on a cart to a place north of the *āhavanīya* where the cattle to be raided are equally posted. Here the “forward fire” seems to be directly comparable to the fire

the Achaemenid rulers had carried before them when marching out with their army.<sup>89</sup>

In brief, then, the mobile fire of the transhumance and raiding circuit has been amalgamated with the disposition of the fires on the place of sacrifice in much the same way as the *śālā* and the *mahāvedi* have been unified in the single *devayajana* of the standardized soma ritual. Or, in terms of lived-in reality, the trek has been fused with the laager.

Both the standard soma ritual and the *agnyādhēya* still bear the marks of their dual origin. As we already saw, they share the same pattern. In fact their similarity goes even further. The soma cycle's last *īṣṭi*, the *udavasānīyā* or "breaking up," involves taking up the fires in the *araṇis* and settle elsewhere for this *īṣṭi*. The interesting point is that this *īṣṭi* corresponds exactly to the one that marks the *punarādhēya*, the repeated setting up of the fires. This explains why there should be such a second *ādhāna*—although the ritualists meant the first performance to be the once-and-for-all establishment of the *śrauta* fire. The *punarādhēya* was originally not the repetition of the *ādhāna* but its counterpart at the other end of the transhumance and raiding cycle and therefore is to take place at the tail end of the hot season before the onset of the monsoon when, as we saw, the Kuru-Pāñcālas returned to their homesteads with their herds and booty.<sup>90</sup>

This also clarifies the origin of the *agnyādhēya* as well as its place in the texts, after the *īṣṭi* model, although the latter requires the *śrauta* fires to have been already established. As I have argued elsewhere in more detail, the *agnyādhēya* and its counterpart, the *punarādhēya*, do not only share the same cyclical pattern with the soma cycle, in great part they—notably the *śrauta* part—are directly derived from it.<sup>91</sup> That this derivation was still present to the mind of the ritualists is clearly illustrated by the Baudhāyana school, in which we find an exact homologation of *ādhāna* and soma ritual.<sup>92</sup> In the same way there is the interesting coincidence of a cow sacrifice preceding, according to the White Yajurveda, the *punarādhēya*, and a similar cow sacrifice at the end of the soma sacrifice (the *maitrāvaruṇī vaśā*) before breaking up for the last *īṣṭi*.<sup>93</sup> Together *agnyādhēya* and *punarādhēya*, then, represent the nodal points of the mobile soma cycle—churning the fire, setting up the *vihāra*, taking up the fire in the fire drill, and setting out again, each time accompanied by a sacrificial feast, albeit reduced to the *śrauta* format of a simple vegetal *īṣṭi*. Having been lifted out of the soma cycle and elaborated into a separate ritual the *ādhāna* was kept near the treatment of the animal and soma sacrifices instead of being placed at the start of the whole corpus as one might expect. Only a few, comparatively late, texts start their exposition of the *śrauta* corpus with the setting up of the fires.<sup>94</sup>

But the fact that the *ādhāna* continued to occupy its incongruous place

near the soma ritual's treatment, even though it was meant to be the sacrificer's entry into the *śrauta* ritual, tells us also something about the development of the *śrauta* corpus. Placed in between the sacrifices of the vegetal *iṣṭi* type and the animal and soma sacrifice—the independent animal sacrifice (*nirūḍha-paśubandha*) being also extracted from the soma cycle—the *ādhāna* constitutes, as it were, the turning point between the two types of sacrificial ritual. Now the *iṣṭi* is limited to the fires in the *śālā*; the animal and soma sacrifice, however, require the *mahāvedi*, where most of the sacrificial ritual is situated. Even though the fire is brought from the *śālā* to the new oblatinal altar on the *mahāvedi* outside, it is a fixed rule that fire churned for the purpose should be added to the one brought over and already burning on the new *āhavanīya*. The divide between the two types of sacrifice, then, is not the one between vegetal and blood sacrifice but that between the (at least in principle) fixed *śālā*, the hall where the lordly asuras stayed, and the mobile laager of the soma *dikṣita* moving about, like the devas, “on wheels” with his carts and cattle. The latter must each time churn and set up his fire anew.

The *agnyādhya* is the transition from the *śālā* with its attached open altar space to the mobile *mahāvedi*, in principle independent of the *śālā*. In concise terms, the *ādhāna* originally mediated between *kṣema* and *yoga*, between the permanent and immobile *gārhapatya* in the magnate's *śālā* and the intermittent mobile fire of the trekking *dikṣita*. Here we have the prefiguration of what later was to become the divide between the domestic *grhya* and the *śrauta* ritual outside of and transcending the domestic and social world. While *śālā* and *mahāvedi* stood for the cyclically alternating phases of the same fire, permanent as against mobile, the *śrauta* ritual, definitively set apart in its own transcendent sphere, required its own rigidly separate fire. It was only natural that the *ādhāna* ritual took up the function of giving access to the transcendent *śrauta* world while giving a new significance to the *araṇis* that produce the separate *śrauta* fire. But in its intermediate position between *iṣṭi* and *agniṣṭoma*, *śālā* and *mahāvedi*, as well as in the prominence it gives to the *odana*, the *agnyādhya* still bears witness to a previous state of affairs preceding the *grhya-śrauta* dichotomy. And this, it would seem, was the reason that it was construed as a hinge between the two now separate but parallel systems of *grhya* and *śrauta* ritual.

#### 4.7

Our survey of the fire cult's cyclical periodicity has pointed up various interlocking aspects of the fire's alternating phases—collected and dispersed, present and hidden, permanent and intermittent, static and mobile. These cyclically alternating complementarities form the basic pattern of the fire cult. But how is their alternation played out by the human actors? Here we

come on the ultimate opposition, namely one's own and other people's fire. Who owns—and jealously guards—the fire? Or, if the others are in possession of their own fire, whose fire will subdue and control the others? On this pivotal point the various aspects of the fire's alternating phases converge. And it was the answer to this question that was at stake in the sacrificial cult of the fire. In other words, the fire was the center of the sacrificial contest until sacrifice was made to veer sharply away from the agonistic-dualist pattern in favor of the rigidly monistic order of ritualism that excluded the opponent. But the detached parts of the contest cycle and the alternating fortunes of the contending parties remain clearly recognizable. The mold was fundamentally changed but the material remained the same. The fire remained central to the proceedings, even more so after the thorough monistic remolding. And so it also preserved the marks of the sacrificial contest for its control.

This comes out already at the very start of the standard *īṣṭi* proceedings, on the eve of the sacrifice when the fires are fueled. This self-evident act is, however, made out to be a “grasping” of the fire as a first move in the sacrificial contest. It should preemptively decide “to whose sacrifice the gods will come, to whose not”; “Who on the eve grasps the fire (*agnim grhṇāti*), he will the next day sacrifice to the gods; he grasps the fire with the mantra ‘Ours be the glory in the rival invocations (*viḥava*)’; in this way he has grasped the gods.”<sup>95</sup> Appropriating the fire, then, decides the sacrificial contest. Or rather one appropriates the rival's sacrifice together with the gods.<sup>96</sup> As is said of a series of verses recited when touching the offerings put ready on the *vedi*, “Thereby he takes away the other's sacrifice, the other does not take away his sacrifice; he is with sacrifice (*sayajña*), the other is without sacrifice (*ayajña*).”<sup>97</sup> Given the intimate connection we have come to know of the fire with cattle, the actual goods of sacrifice, it is no matter for surprise that “grasping the fire” should be tantamount to appropriating the rival's cattle and sacrifice. However, although this has the ring of an actual contest, we do not see the rival and the contest remains shrouded in ritualistic symbolism.

We get nearer the original realities with the game of dice that is inserted in the sacrifice of the Agni cake that follows the setting up of the five fires in the *agnyādhya*. We have noticed already the appropriative value assigned to the verses concerned with the servicing of Agni. But now we see an actual contest, although the outcome has been ritualistically predetermined. Its insertion in the regular *īṣṭi* scheme, right after the rice for the Agni cake has been taken out, suggests a close connection between the Agni sacrifice and the game of dice. Agni's rice cake, encompassing the dicing contest, would seem to be the *śrauta* counterpart of the rice mess that replaces a cow as the prize of the contest.

The locale of the game of dice is, however, not the normal three-fire

*vihāra* where the Agni *īṣṭi* takes place but the *sabhā*, the assembly hall, with its *sabhya* fire. It is the only clear case of the *sabhā* and its companion, the “residence hall” (*āvasatha*), being used. One understands why. The *sabhā* is too intensely social, harboring disputation and contest, to suit *śrauta* ritualism.<sup>98</sup> The reason for its mostly nominal preservation would have been the need to fill out the pentadic scheme of fires rather than a concession to the dice-loving nobility as is usually supposed. The incongruous position of the *sabhya* and the *āvasathya* fires is illustrated by the uncertainty of the texts about their source—*āhavanīya*, a separately churned or “profane” fire installed without mantras—while there are even unnamed authorities who simply ruled out their being set up.<sup>99</sup> In the desocialized world of the *śrauta* system it could have no proper function, except in the *agnyādheya* because of the latter’s intermediate position. And in accordance with the double pattern of the *agnyādheya* we have on the one hand the regular Agni *īṣṭi* in the normal *vihāra* and on the other the dicing game enclosed in the *īṣṭi*’s time span but on its own ground, the *sabhā*.<sup>100</sup>

Now the stake of the game is the substance of wealth and food, the cow. The four partners in the game compete for shares in the cow. One will hardly be incorrect if one thinks here of the four brahmins who share, albeit in equal parts, the rice mess of the *agnyādheya*. In fact, when the game is over, the cow is not killed but replaced by a rice mess. At least that is how the later ritualists wanted to have it. Incidentally, rather than vegetarian scruples alien to Vedic ritual, this suggests that the *odana* was associated with the cow, either through the milk in which it was cooked or through its meat, which may on occasion have been an ingredient of the rice mess.<sup>101</sup> The interesting point is that here we find the rice mess again but in a more elaborate scenario involving a contest for shares in it. This scenario would seem to be nearer to the original state of affairs. Otherwise one would be hard put to understand how the peaceful and unexciting rice mess could be “all conquering” (*viśvajit*) and associated with beating down one’s enemies, as it is in the Atharvaveda.<sup>102</sup> In the latter tradition we also meet the “army fire” (*senāgni*) that in the atharvanic *odana* ritual may fulfill the same function as the *sava* fire.<sup>103</sup> And this in turn may explain how manly virtue and the cooking of the rice mess are practically synonymous in the phrase, “O Agni, you were born for great manliness (*mahate vīryāya*), for cooking the *odana*.”<sup>104</sup> The manliness here clearly refers to Aditi and her wish to obtain progeny through the *odana*. But then the Ādityas, as we have seen, are born as redoubtable contenders who bar the sacrificer’s way to heaven.<sup>105</sup> And the sacrificer can only overcome their resistance by fueling his *odana* cooking fire with the three logs of wood.

In this connection it is interesting that there are a couple of *īṣṭis*, addressed to Agni Vaiśvānara, the fire “common to all men,” which are intended for going to battle, when battle has been joined, and finally after

having won a victory.<sup>106</sup> This reminds us of the Agni cake that encompasses the dicing contest for the cow and the *odana*. Here the *odana* is completely eliminated in favor of the standard cake offering. Significantly, however, instead of the cake for Agni Vaiśvānava we also find an Aditi *caru* which brings us back again to the *odana*. When we put these dispersed pieces of evidence together, we discern behind the charitable feeding of four brahmins a rather different scene of agonistic violence centered on the fire as the sign and source of victory, food, wealth, and prestige. But, apart from the ritualized dicing game, the actual contest and its opposite party still elude us.

There is, however, one more source of information. This concerns the way one should obtain one's fire. There is, of course, the fire drill. They may be used to obtain one's primary fire, the domestic one that defines the household. However, this method is only an alternative. It is not the preferred one but rather a subsidiary method in case the fire has inadvertently gone out.<sup>107</sup> Preference clearly goes to live fire taken from someone else's hearth. Thus the nuptial fire, taken from the bride's home at the time of marriage and transported to the groom's place, is set up as the domestic fire of the new household. This appears to be the predominant mode mentioned in most texts. As already mentioned, the interesting result is that, in sharp contrast to the exclusively patrilineal character of the household, its domestic fire is derived from and perpetuated in the female line—a fact the patrilineal orientation of the texts has to leave aside.<sup>108</sup> One may, however, also take one's domestic fire from the hearth one has served with firewood as a pupil in the teacher's and foster father's home. Leaving the teacher's household roughly coincides with the time of marriage. Taking one's fire from it seems more in line with the markedly patrilineal tendencies, but it is far removed from an "ancestral" fire.

Lineage, however, seems to be only a minor consideration in obtaining one's fire, if it is considered at all. The main point is that it is to be taken from someone else, whether related or not. And so we find that one may also obtain one's domestic fire from a cattle-rich vaiśya, a munificent sacrificer (*bahuyājīn*), or a learned brahmin (*śrotriya*).<sup>109</sup> Or it may be taken by means of a frying pan (*ambarīṣa*), but this refers to the method of obtaining fire—namely, by heating a pan until the combustible material contained in it catches fire<sup>110</sup>—and not to the place from which it is to be taken. The munificent sacrificer and the learned brahmin are fairly obvious choices because of their general auspiciousness. The vaiśya, however, presents a different case. He is not so obviously auspicious, and the only thing that speaks for him as a commendable provider of fire is his wealth in cattle. But here is also the crux of the matter. We meet this wealthy vaiśya also in another context. From the chapter in the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā dealing with the "names of the cow" (*gonāmika*) we learn how to use these divine names to

rob our wealthy vaiśya—who in this case may even be a sūdra—of his cattle by luring away to one’s own side an uncastrated bull calf that is then followed by the cows. When this thinly disguised act of cattle rustling, graced by calling out the divine names of the cow, is crowned with success—“nothing remains for him”—the successful sacrificer should prepare with the milk of all the cows so obtained a four-measure *odana* for four brahmins.<sup>111</sup> Here we are back again at the *odana* of the *agnyādheya* and generally of the periodic celebration of the fire.

Interestingly, we see here once again that the *odana* is not simply a matter of a festive meal but the prize of a fight for the “goods of life” that now show up unabashedly as the adversary’s cattle wealth. And, as in the case of the prize in the dicing contest, the cows won from the “wealthy vaiśya” more than likely provide not only the milk for the *odana* but meat as well.<sup>112</sup> Our *gonāmika* passage adds still-another element to the picture that emerges. The calling out of the names of the cow that should ensure success in what is clearly a contest evokes the *vihava*, the rival invocation between two parties contending for the favor of the gods who dispense the goods of life or (what comes down to the same) fighting for the mobile goods of life themselves that move between the two parties. “To whom these [cows] come they are victorious. He wins the battle.”<sup>113</sup> The conclusion of the contest then is the festive meal won from the adversary. The *gonāmika* has enabled us to identify the elusive opposite party. It is the wealthy vaiśya, the clansman or rather clan magnate whose cattle wealth is at stake in the conventional but far from harmless fight for the goods of life.

But where in all this is the fire? We have already seen that fire and cattle are intimately connected to the extent that taking someone’s fire is tantamount to taking his cattle. This we are told in so many words in the same *gonāmika*: “He should take brightly burning fire from the home of his rival, he [thereby] takes his wealth, his property.”<sup>114</sup> He should then keep awake during the night—a sensible precaution because the rival will most probably come after him, which also throws a rather chilling light on the prescription to keep awake at the *brāhmaudanika* fire. That this connection with the *brāhmaudanika* fire is not so farfetched as one might first suppose comes out with unexpected clarity when we notice that the Maitrāyaṇī in its treatment of the *agnyādheya* tells us that to become rich in cattle one should take the fire from the house of a wealthy person (*bahupusta*).<sup>115</sup> Although the *dakṣiṇāgni* seems meant, this is not different from the *brāhmaudanika* fire, which is the same as the domestic fire and which, as we concluded, was originally, before the *grhya-śrauta* split, also the sacrificial cult fire consecrated with the *odana* ceremony.<sup>116</sup> In other words, one wins one’s fire from one’s rival, together with the rival’s goods and chattels. And this rival is the *bahupusta* we have already come to know as the one from whom one should win one’s domestic fire.

Even though the *bahupūṣṭa* magnate is not characterized as a vaiśya (or śūdra) we may reasonably assume him to be the same person. The parallel passage in the Kāthaka calls him a brāhmaṇa or a vaiśya.<sup>117</sup> Although the vaiśya qualification of the opponent has, as I will argue later, its own significance we should not think here of the classical *varṇa* scheme that seems to have been superimposed, albeit incompletely.<sup>118</sup> Anyway, the opponent in the shape of a vaiśya is well known.<sup>119</sup> More important than the question of whether the relevant magnate is qualified as a brāhmaṇa, a vaiśya, or even as a śūdra is the further information provided by the Kāthaka. He should be “well-to-do (*pūṣṭa*) like an asura.”<sup>120</sup> Incidentally, this may also throw light on the brāhmaṇas’ statement that he who removes the fire (*udvāsayate*, *utsādayate*) scatters sacrifice and cattle or is even guilty of manslaughter.<sup>121</sup> Rather than terminate a sacrificial fire—what is regularly done at the end of a sacrifice—it suggests the forcible removal of the wealthy magnate’s fire and cattle. Being “like an asura,” the latter is not likely to give in without a fight that may well end in manslaughter.

Here we have come full circle and are back again with the asura-like magnate “sitting in his *śālā*” and challenged on his place of sacrifice by the “gods driving about on wheels” who are after his fire and cattle.<sup>122</sup>

#### 4.8

The contest for possession of the fire can also explain the peculiarity we already noticed, namely the doubling of the sacrificial fire’s kindling on the *mahāvedi* at the animal and soma sacrifice. First live fire is carried from the *śālā* to the *āhavanīya* hearth on the *mahāvedi*. Then, when the animal victim has been brought up and tied to the sacrificial pole, the *yūpa*, fire is churned from the *araṇis* and added to the already-burning fire. The double kindling is the stranger for the general rule against mixing fires, even those belonging to one and the same sacrificer.<sup>123</sup> The point is that the single sacrificer who has incorporated his rival must play two roles at the same time, that of the asura-like magnate with his fire permanently established in his fire hall as well as that of his itinerant, deva-like challenger who has not yet set up his permanent fireplace and residence but carries his fire—still in abeyance—in himself, that is, in his fire drill. The fire brought out of the *śālā* to the sacrificial hearth on the *mahāvedi* is the magnate’s cult fire. The churned fire is the challenger’s opposing fire. In the same way we can understand that the *dakṣiṇāgni*, the southern cooking fire, is said to belong to the rival (*blvrātrīryadevatya*), although it is in fact the same as the domestic *brāhmaṇa*-*danika* fire that, if not extinguished or left to go out by itself, is carried to the southern hearth. Obviously we have here another instance of the same doubling of roles, the *dakṣiṇāgni* filling out the gap left by the now-absent rival. This also explains the origin of the alternative rule that allows the



*dakṣiṇāgni* to be churned instead of perpetuating the *brāhmaudanika*. Viewed in this way the southern fire is analogous to the challenger's churned fire deposited on the *āhavanīya*.

Although the mixing of the two fires on the *āhavanīya* clearly evokes conflict, the ritual has obliterated every trace of any such conflict around the oblatinal hearth. Buddhist imagination, however, offers a glimpse of what the fire conflict may have meant. I am referring to the Kassapa episode of the Buddha's life, which we have already briefly mentioned.<sup>124</sup> Dismayed at the Buddha's request to spend the night in the fire house Kassapa warns him three times against a dreadful serpent king residing in the fire house. The Buddha insists, however, enters the fire house, and sits down on a grass bed. Angered at the intrusion the serpent sends forth a cloud of smoke, for he is, of course, no other than the fire itself.<sup>125</sup> The Buddha then decides "to conquer the fire which he will send forth by my fire." So the battle is joined and flames issue forth from the fire house setting the nightly scene ablaze before the eyes of Kassapa's followers, who are attracted by the sight of the epic contest. Finally, toward daybreak, the Buddha manages to subdue Kassapa's fire. Leaving the fire dragon intact—in striking contrast to the warrior god Indra, who gorily dismembers his dragon adversary, Vṛtra<sup>126</sup>—he shows his host the next morning a tamed snake, cosily curled up in his conqueror's almsbowl. "Here, Kassapa, you see the serpent; his fire has been conquered by my fire."

For all the edification of this episode we can hardly miss the parallel with the Vedic cult fire. The itinerant Buddha gains, not without difficulty, access to the enclosure where Kassapa keeps his permanent fire. There he "exteriorizes" his own fire, which he carries within himself on his peregrinations. A contest ensues, and finally the itinerant's fire subdues and overtakes the permanent fire of his host and opponent. The Kassapa episode imaginatively supplies what is missing in the Vedic fire cult—the contest that the ritualistic fusion of the established sacrificer and his itinerant opponent into a single person has obliterated.

It is the contest, preserved in the mythic imagination of the Kassapa story, that formed the dynamic center of the original Vedic fire cult. Here, in the contest, the participants brought to a head and acted out the riddle of the fire and its control. They did so by breaking down the fire's enigmatic unaccountability in oppositions—permanent and intermittent, manifest and hidden, collected and dispersed, stable and mobile, own and other's—and by conceptually organizing them as cyclically alternating phases. These oppositions and phases were then to be activated and played out by the contenders, on the one hand the settled magnate, with his permanently manifest and collected fire on its stable fireplace, on the other hand the itinerant challenger who carries within himself his mobile and intermittent fire. The contest formed the nexus and turning point. Depending on its

outcome the magnate may lose out and exchange his role for that of the itinerant challenger and start out on the opposite phase. Or, as likely as not, either of the two may lose his life in the contest.

Here we should recall the vaiśya, “well-to-do like an asura,” as the archetypal opponent of the itinerant sacrificer-to-be who is after the former’s fire and cattle. Now the interesting point is that it is again a vaiśya who stops and questions the party that has gone out to “collect” the fire “hidden in the mud” (*purīśya*).<sup>127</sup> What, however, must also be collected is a human head that is to be buried under the brick altar, together with four animal heads (horse, bull, ram, and he-goat), and this head should be, once more, that of a vaiśya or a rājanya fallen in battle.<sup>128</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, this vaiśya (or rājanya) is the same as the one who stops the party on its way to win the hidden *purīśya* fire.<sup>129</sup> If he loses out, he pays for it with his head. But so may also be the lot of the itinerant challenger. The prestigious brick altar erected over the head of the slain warrior is the funerary monument of the opponent honorably fallen in the sacrificial contest for the fire that marks the magnate’s residence as well as the mobile cattle corral.

But this means that the scheme of alternating phases and of the interchange of roles is always in danger of being stopped dead in its cyclical tracks at the nodal point of the contest. Either the one or the other contender may have to pay with his life and bring the cycle to a stop. In the nightmarishly hypertrophical imagination of the Mahābhārata it is not one but both parties that are virtually annihilated, leaving neither conqueror nor loser. It was this continual threat of total collapse that brought about the ritualistic revolution. The dualist dynamics of the sacral contest were replaced with the monist stasis of the transcendent rule of ritual. The nexus of the contest gone, the cult of the fire fell apart. Its opposite phases and the parties acting them out had either to be collapsed into each other or kept rigorously separate, leaving an unbridgeable gap between them. Both happened. The permanent fire in the *śālā* of the magnate who was fittingly known as a *śālīna* naturally became the *grhya* fire. Although capable of being moved and resettled, it was definitively cut off from its mobile counterpart, the hidden and intermittently set up fire of the *yāyāvara*, the peregrinator.<sup>130</sup> The latter on the other hand was turned into the *śrauta* fire rigorously set apart and stabilized on the unified but transient place of sacrifice, not to be left by the sacrificer until the liturgy is over but then abandoned.

No alien fire should be admitted anymore, because this would mean *samsava* or *samṛtayaajña*, that is, sacrificial contest. Therefore, adequate spatial distance should be maintained between individual places of sacrifice, where the ritual is being simultaneously performed.<sup>131</sup> For the same reason the still-extant rules allowing to take the fire for the southern hearth elsewhere—either from the domestic hearth via the *brāhmaudanika* or from

the notorious asura-like magnate—are in the actual ritual silently replaced by a unitary procedure. The southern fire is like the *āhavanīya* taken from the single sacrificer's *gārhapatya*. Or one may have recourse to the old practice of the peregrinator's mobile fire and churn the southern fire each time from one's *araṇis* in the same way the *gārhapatya* was produced. In this way too the *dakṣiṇāgni* can be viewed as entirely equal with the other *śrauta* fires so as to form a homologous group with them.<sup>132</sup>

The gap left by the eliminated contest shows up clearest, as we saw, in the *agnyādheya*. It is indeed the central concern and *raison d'être* of this ritualistic construct that must bridge the now unbridgeable gap between the two fire cults, the worldly domestic cult and the ultramundane *śrauta* liturgy. In fact, however, the answer to the conundrum is man himself as a sacrificer. The Śatapatha tells us how the *agnyādheya* originated in the everlasting contest of the *devas* and the *asuras*. "They were both without an *ātman*, a self, for they were mortal; he who has no *ātman* is mortal; Agni alone among both [*devas* and *asuras*] was immortal". At first bested by the *asuras*, the gods finally "beheld that immortality[giving] *agnyādheya*" and "having set up this immortality in their inner selves (*antār ātmán*) they became immortal."<sup>133</sup> The fire, then, is established in man's inner self as the *ātman* and principle of immortality. But this means that by performing the *agnyādheya* man puts himself in the breach between the mortal world and the transcendence of immortality. Ultimately the essence of ritualism is that man, kindling the fire in his inner self, must act out in himself the sacrificial contest of life and death, being, like Prajāpati, his own opponent, Death.

#### 4.9

Having reached this point the sacrificial cult of the fire had run its full course. Its core and origin had been the manipulation of the fire's enigmatic ambivalence, its sudden appearance by lightning or otherwise and instant proliferation as against its burning out and disappearance, its life-sustaining as well as its destructive capacity. Manipulative control meant that the paradoxical qualities of the fire were molded into a pattern of cyclically alternating phases corresponding to the rhythm of the community. The sedentary life in the cultivating settlement was pitted against the opposite phase of the mobile, transhumant warrior-herdsman in the wild, the stable and permanent domestic hearth against the mobile and intermittently set up camp fire, the magnate's *śālā* against the movable *mahāvedi*, *kṣema* against *yoga*. The nexus and turning point of the opposite phases was the sacrificial contest at which the fire on the magnate's hearth was challenged by the mobile fire kept in abeyance in the itinerant warrior's fire drill or hidden in its bed of ashes in the fire pot.<sup>134</sup> There, at the crossroad of the heavenward eastern direction and the obstructing line running northward, the tension

is brought to a head and battle must be joined. The issue of the contest was control of the other's fire, promising the goods of life as well as death and destruction.

Both Zoroastrian Iran and Vedic India overcame the periodically destabilizing contest. Iran maximized the *śālā* phase by "enthroning" the "victory fire" in its temple as the transcendent *pādishāh* to preside in its static center of stillness over realm and community. India started at the other end by turning the mobile, intermittently hidden, and churned-out fire into the transcendent *śrauta* fire. As the opposite phases fell into each other and the sacrificer came to incorporate his rival, so their fires were fused. But while Zoroastrianism raised the exterior fire to the transcendent plane as the eternal flame of universal dominion, Vedism went the other way and interiorized the fire in the person of the single individual sacrificer. The *agnyādheya* came to mean, as we have seen, the founding of the fire in the inner self as the principle of its immortality. By the same token nothing can come any more between the sacrificer and his fire, nor can the fire be lost or taken away, for "as long as he lives the fire which is established in his inner self does not become extinct in him."<sup>135</sup> In succinct terms, the Zoroastrian's fire transcended man; Vedic ritualism, however, taught man to transcend the fire.

But the achievement of Vedic ritualism meant at the same time the death-knell for the cult of the fire as the center of society. In Iran the fire "enthroned" in its temple survived the ages. In India, by contrast, established in the inner self, it was spirited out of social life. Society in its turn took up and developed in various, sometimes spectacular ways other elements of the sacrificial complex, notably the distribution of food and gift giving. Interestingly the latter—*dāna*—is even held by the normative dharma texts to have replaced *yajña*, sacrifice, as the primary duty in the *kaliyuga*, the present fourth and decayed era.<sup>136</sup>

Yet the experience of the fire cult and its development into *śrauta* ritualism had been momentous. It led to the discovery of the ultimate transcendent center in the extrasocial individual and his imperishable *ātman*. The single *śrauta* sacrificer, continuing the tradition of the mobile fireplace, turned into the itinerant renouncer—as did the fire-worshipping Kassapa and his cenobitic followers when they gave up the external cult fire that was vanquished by the Buddha's inner fire. But at the same time, freed from the pressures of the surrounding society, the stabilized *śrauta* cult of the single sacrificer's individual fire could be faithfully preserved in scripture and practice as the lasting record of a decisive breakthrough.

## *Priest and Sacrificer*

### 5.1

THE MOBILITY OF THE FIRE and its cult has familiarized us with the basic polarity of the *śālā* or hall and with the open sacrificial area attached to it, as against the mobile laager and cattle corral. It is the same polarity that opposes the sedentary lordly patron and sacrificer—the *sūri* or *maghavan* of the Ṛgveda—to the itinerant warrior and herdsman on his trek in search of pastures, cattle wealth, prestige, and patronage. Or, as the lapidary saying preserved in the Śatapatha has it, “the devas drove about with wheels, the asuras sat in their halls (*śālā*).”<sup>1</sup> What, however, seems to be lacking in this sacrificial universe is a clearly defined priesthood that the central institution of sacrifice leads us to expect. It looks as if the polar opposition of hall and encampment, lordly patron and itinerant warrior, fills the sacrificial universe to capacity, leaving no place for an established priesthood.

This is, of course, not to deny that there were certain priestly functions to be fulfilled, such as those of bards, poets, and singers or those directly concerned with sacrifice. Also the Indo-Iranian heritage points up the existence of an impressive body of priestly lore transmitted and elaborated in leading families or clans such as the Vāsiṣṭhas, the Viśvāmitras, and others to whom the “family books” of the Ṛgveda are ascribed. But we find little if any evidence of a specialized professional priesthood, let alone an exclusive priestly estate. Even the eponymous ancestor of the Vāsiṣṭhas—who come nearest to being an exclusively priestly clan and are said once to have been the only ones eligible for the *brahman*’s office at a sacrifice<sup>2</sup>—equally turns out to be not only a priest but a successful war leader as well.<sup>3</sup> And the same goes for his constant rival Viśvāmitra. In fact this is what we should expect because the archetypal warrior god Indra is given qualifications like *brahman*, *ṛṣi*, *kavi*, and *vipra*, suggesting priestly capacities, while the name of the priestly god Bṛhaspati appears originally to have been an epithet of Indra, as has been convincingly argued by Hanns-Peter Schmidt.<sup>4</sup>

The absence—in contrast to the late Vedic situation—of an exclusive

specialized priesthood in charge of sacrifice shows itself also in the lack of correspondence, with only a few exceptions, between the ancient Indian and Iranian designations of priestly functions in the cult of the fire and the soma (Avestan *haoma*), which nevertheless forms the centerpiece of the common Indo-Iranian heritage. There is, of course, the word *atharvan* (Avestan *āthravan*, *athaurvan*)—of doubtful etymology—that may be quoted as a general term for “priest,” suggesting an ancient priesthood, at least in its Iranian (late Avestan) usage. In the Ṛgveda the mythic Atharvan is mentioned as a primordial sacrificer establishing cosmic order,<sup>5</sup> as concerned with generating or drilling fire,<sup>6</sup> and as mixing the soma and the hot *gharma* milk.<sup>7</sup> But this hardly differentiates him from other mythic sacrificers. Nor can the Atharvaveda, a late compilation of partly older material, give us a clear answer. Its designation as the Veda of the *brahman*—the fourth officiant in the *śrauta* ritual next to the *hotṛ*, the *adhvaryu*, and the *udgātṛ*, each with his own Veda—is a late ritualistic construction. More credible is the claim that the king’s brahmin assistant, the *purohita*, “the one put in front,” should be an expert of the Atharvaveda, which does indeed contain much material that is pertinent to a royal chaplain’s function.<sup>8</sup>

It seems quite possible that already in ancient times the *atharvan-āthravan* was the king’s or magnate’s domestic priest. But this does not necessarily imply an exalted position. Even if the domestic priest in India is called *purohita*, his being “put in front” can also mean that he is the one to catch the blows, if not as the scapegoat. The Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa tells us about a lethal accident caused by the king’s chariot.<sup>9</sup> The king blames his *purohita* for the accident, as it turns out, quite correctly, for the *purohita* was the king’s charioteer. “Formerly,” we are told, “the *purohitas* used to serve the kings as charioteers.” Fortunately the incident ends happily. His expertise in magic spells enables the *purohita* to revive the killed brahmin boy and to free himself from guilt. But the charioteer’s service sheds a rare and unexpected light on the nature of the *purohita*’s priesthood.

As regards the *atharvan-āthravan*, there is little specific information on the nature and content of his priesthood. The rendering of “fire priest” for the Iranian cognate, the *āthravan*, apart from being doubtful, does not tell us more than the fact that he would be primarily concerned with the cult fire, which is true for every householder and sacrificer.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, to obscure the matter even further, morphological difficulties in viewing the Indian and Iranian forms as variants of the same word make it likely that the Indian *atharvan* may be an (early) Iranian loan, which would account for his somewhat peripheral position.<sup>11</sup> But the Iranian material is even less informative than the Vedic, the term having been largely superseded by *magu* in the sense of a specifically priestly functionary. The Iranian *āthravan*, then, does attest to the early existence of priestly figures serving kings and magnates. But his status of a priestly servant in a magnate’s household

does not speak for an autonomous estate and certainly not for high status or spiritual authority.

The one term common to both branches of the Indo-Iranian legacy that denotes a clearly defined priestly function is the word *hotṛ* (Avestan *zaotar*), the officiant charged, in both traditions, with recitations. The stereotype number of seven *hotṛ* offices in the soma ritual—eight if the sacrificer is included—tallies with the eight officiants enumerated for the Zoroastrian *haoma* ceremony, even though their designations differ.<sup>12</sup> However, it does not seem that these liturgical offices were the specialized ones the full-blown later ritual requires. In fact, it would seem that the seven *hotṛ*s originally were not specialized priests engaged by the sacrificer for the occasion but themselves sacrificers in their own right, each seated at his own *dhīṣṇya* hearth and competing with the others.<sup>13</sup>

Albrecht Weber suggested already that the rendering “sacrificer” would better suit the “older general meaning” of the word *hotṛ* than “priest.”<sup>14</sup> The ritual texts still contain a few indications to this effect. Thus the sacrificer himself can act as *hotṛ*.<sup>15</sup> We also find it explicitly stated that in the domestic *pākayajña* sacrifice the sacrificer is the *hotṛ*, the only officiant being the *brahman* (i.e., it would seem, the *purohita*).<sup>16</sup> Both *hotṛ* and sacrificer are said to be the self (*ātman*) of the sacrifice.<sup>17</sup> This is less surprising than it may seem at first sight. The sacrificer is, as we have seen, intimately connected with his fire, while the *hotṛ* is the human counterpart of the divine fire, Agni. *Hotṛ* and sacrificer are so closely related as to be all but identical.

Viewed in this light it is doubtful whether the *hotṛ*, and consequently the Iranian cognate, the *zaotar*, can be considered as typical representatives of an original priesthood. At best the categories of priest and sacrificer can be said to be barely differentiated. The essential agent is the sacrificer who competes with his likes as the chief celebrant and priest at his own sacrificial fire.

## 5.2

In this connection it is significant that the *pravara*, the “election” or solemn installation of the *hotṛ* officiants in the classical *śrauta* ritual is not limited to the category of these specialists but also includes their patron, the sacrificer himself. The formula for his election is “Agni [is] the leader of the divine clans (*Agnir daivīnām viśām puraetā*), this sacrificer of the human ones.”<sup>18</sup> Now it is the *hotṛ* who is regularly, in the *pravara* as elsewhere, mentioned as the human counterpart of Agni, the divine *hotṛ*. So, in accordance with the near identity of sacrificer and *hotṛ*, the sacrificer here appears as the *hotṛ par excellence*, elected as the leader, the *puraetā*, from among his likes.

The Śatapatha does indeed make the sacrificer’s *hotṛ* identity explicit.<sup>19</sup> But the situation is slightly more complicated, for this passage explains that

we are concerned here with two *hotṛ*s, the second being the *maitrāvaruṇa* or *praśāstr*, and that the *hotṛ* who is elected as the leader is the latter one. The passage thus clinches the matter by stating, “but actually it is the sacrificer whom one elects with the words ‘Agni is the leader of the divine clans. . . .’ Accordingly the corresponding sūtra has the *maitrāvaruṇa* officiant not “elected” but simply installed, after the sacrificer’s election, by handing him the staff that is the distinctive attribute of his office.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly this is the same staff the sacrificer has received when he underwent the consecration for the soma sacrifice.<sup>21</sup>

But why should the sacrificer be the “second” *hotṛ* instead of the *hotṛ tout court*? We meet such a “second” *hotṛ* elsewhere, in the *agnicayana* ritual. When the fire is finally brought to the finished brick altar this “second *hotṛ*”—according to the sūtras the *maitrāvaruṇa*, the *brahman*, the *brāhmaṇācchamsin*, or the *pratiprasthātṛ*—recites the Apratiratha hymn, the hymn of the “Unconquerable.”<sup>22</sup> With this hymn, we are told, the devas overcame their rivals, the asuras, and it is said to be an effective means to secure victory in a battle. In other words, the one who recites it—in this case the “second *hotṛ*”—is involved in a contest or battle against his rivals. As we have already seen, bringing forward the fire to the *āhavanīya* hearth—whether it be the simple earth mound or the prestigious brick altar—is imagined to be a conquering progress.<sup>23</sup> So the recitation of the Apratiratha hymn on the occasion of bringing the fire to the brick altar cannot cause surprise. But again, why should this victory-bringing recitation fall to the part of the “second *hotṛ*”? The situation can be compared with the one in which, after bringing up the sacrificial victim, fire is churned and added to the already-burning *āhavanīya* fire.<sup>24</sup> As I have argued, the already-burning fire is the magnate sacrificer’s cult fire. The freshly churned one belongs to his challenger. This, then, may explain the role of the “second *hotṛ*.” He represents the rival sacrificer challenging his lordly sacrificial opponent at the latter’s altar. If we may assume that the “second *hotṛ*” is identical with the *maitrāvaruṇa*, a curious detail we noted previously falls into place. The inviting verses (*puro’nuvākya*) are said to belong to the rival. It will not be fortuitous that they are recited by the *maitrāvaruṇa*.<sup>25</sup>

If we now return to the *pravara*, the second *hotṛ*’s original identity as the challenging and ultimately successful sacrificer falls into place. It can indeed be shown that at the back of the “election” there was a contest.<sup>26</sup> This is already clear from the fact that the *pravara* is to take place not at the beginning, as one would expect, but when the fires have been ceremonially stoked up—the *sāmidhenī* rite—and the sacrifice is nearing the climax of immolation, oblation, and distribution of food and gifts. It is at that point of the proceedings that the contest comes to a head and the decision of who is to be the chief celebrant, the ultimate *hotṛ*, is reached. At this point it



should be noted that the *pravara* consists of two parts. First, immediately after the fire has been fueled in the *sāmidhenī* rite to prepare it for receiving the oblations, the *hotṛ* invokes Agni, his divine counterpart, together with the sacrificer's ancestors. Then, after the fire has been tended with two ghee libations (*āghāra*) and the victim has been anointed, follows the second round in which the *adhvaryu* pronounces the election of the human *hotṛ*. Finally he elects the *maitrāvaruṇa*, or rather the sacrificer, followed by the simple installation of the *maitrāvaruṇa*.<sup>27</sup> Significantly the *maitrāvaruṇa* comes in from outside, entering the sacrificial area from the north. He is in other words an itinerant. But as we have seen, it is this itinerant, coming in as a challenger, "whom they elect" as the ultimate leader in the sacrificial contest. In this way we can understand that the *maitrāvaruṇa* is also known as the *praśāstr*, "the one who gives the commands" to the *hotṛ* and (in the soma ritual) the other *hotṛakas* for their recitations.<sup>28</sup>

In this connection it may be recalled that Mitra and Varuṇa show themselves to be expert sacrificers when they answer Manu's challenging question about the ghee-soaked spot of ground—the print of the *idā* cow with the ghee-dripping foot (*ghṛtapadī*)—"Who is able to make this also in sacrifice?" Mitra and Varuṇa know the answer: "It is the cow, we are able to 'make' [her]." <sup>29</sup> The ritual context of the episode is the "calling of *Idā*" (*idāhvāna*), the introduction to the eating of the *idā* portions by the participants, "the seven *hotṛakas*."<sup>30</sup> For our purpose the interesting point is that the *idā* cow is said to belong to Manu as his daughter but she equally belongs to Mitra and Varuṇa who "made" her.<sup>31</sup> In other words, the *idā* cow—and the sacrificial food she provides—is a bone of contention between Manu, the primordial sacrificer, and Mitra-Varuṇa, who claim her. And, indeed, the brāhmaṇas' explanation of the "calling of *Idā*" does evoke the mythic image of the *viḥava*, the rival invocation, by the two parties of devas and asuras to lure the cow to one's own side. The "calling of *Idā*" can therefore, as we are told, be used to deprive one's rival of his cattle.<sup>32</sup>

In this connection also the *maitrāvaruṇī* cow we have already met calls for attention.<sup>33</sup> The sacrifice of this cow takes up a somewhat curious place in the soma cycle, coming as it does at its end or rather when it is all over, after the final *avabhṛtha* bath and the concluding (*udayanīyā*) *īṣṭi*. Its dedication to Mitra and Varuṇa suggests a connection with the *maitrāvaruṇa* officiant. Could it be a transformation of the "second" *hotṛ*'s return sacrifice in reciprocation (or retaliation) of the "first" *hotṛ*'s sacrificial prestation? It would mean that the *maitrāvaruṇī* could reflect an alternating scheme of prestation and revanche, acted out by the two parties taking turns as host and guest in the ongoing sacrificial competition for honor and wealth. It would seem that this is indeed meant when it is stated that at the end of the soma ritual, "like a freed draught bullock or horse goes off, so the deities and the sacrifice leave the one who has sacrificed for the one who has not

sacrificed.”<sup>34</sup> The roles are reversed. Now the ball is in the court of the nonsacrificing beneficiary, to whom deities and sacrifice have come, and it is his turn to put in his *revanche*. The *maitrāvaruṇī* cow, followed by a renewed setting up of the fires for the “breaking-up” (*udavasānīyā*) *iṣṭi*—closely recalling the *punarādhēya* that according to at least one school is equally preceded by a cow sacrifice—is, as it were, the telescoped version of the opposite phase of the cycle.<sup>35</sup> This not only explains the otherwise rather odd phenomenon of a full-scale repeat sacrifice after the conclusion of the soma feast. It can also tell us how the *maitrāvaruṇī* cow can come to be viewed as the expiation for the previous sacrifice, one act of sacrificial violence being compensated by another. Such is indeed the case, except that originally the parties to sacrifice took turns performing it, cyclically playing around the burden instead of the unrelieved single sacrificer pushing the burden before him from expiation to expiation in lineal sequence. Cyclical alternation has been replaced by relentless linearity.

We see, then, that the *maitrāvaruṇa* as the second *hotṛ* challenging the first *hotṛ* and sacrificer is well embedded in the ritual pattern. One may, however, wonder why the second *hotṛ* should represent a dual divinity. The reason may well be that Mitra and Varuṇa form an opposition themselves. The *maitrāvaruṇa* would then bear out the opposition in his own person—as indeed he does as a challenger—while at the same time resolving the conflict by incorporating the erstwhile opponent in himself—as Prajāpati does with his opponent, Death.<sup>36</sup> Mitra and Varuṇa, then, provide the model for the relationship of the two *hotṛs* in the animal sacrifice.<sup>37</sup> At the same time their nature, concerned with alliance and lawful order, would make them apt at presiding over the relationship between the competing partners.

The ritualistic *śrauta* reform obviously does not countenance the contest but can only give the outcome in the form of the single sacrificer solemnly “electing” the ritual experts. But it is significant that the Śatapatha follows up the mantra, “Agni [is] the leader of the divine clans, the sacrificer of the human ones,” with a prayer for perfect harmony: “May the rule over the house (*gārhapatya*) by these two shine brightly, not [like a cart yoked] with [only] one bullock, for a hundred winters, two yoke fellows, exchanging (*samprcānau*) the benefits, not exchanging the bodies.”<sup>38</sup> It is explained that the two whose harmonious relationship is so urgently required are the sacrificer and his divine counterpart Agni, the fire. Therefore, we are told, the two bodies should be kept apart. Otherwise the fire would burn the sacrificer, meaning the latter’s death and cremation. One wonders, though, whether the ambivalent relationship of the sacrificer and his fire does not equally—or even primarily—refer to the two *hotṛs*, the first one and his successful challenger. It is not quite clear why the unity of the sacrificer and his fire should be invoked at the sacrificer’s election, unless we take into

account that the fire is associated with the first *hotṛ* while the sacrificer himself is connected with Mitra-Varuṇa.<sup>39</sup> In other words, the sacrificer's election at the end of the *pravara* ceremony has the character of a compact resolving the contest. The challenger takes the lead as the *praśātr*.<sup>40</sup> In that sense the *hotṛ* can be viewed as a "priest," serving in his Agni-like capacity the "elected" leader, sharing in the benefits without harming him through his fiery power.<sup>41</sup> The *maitrāvaruṇa* on the other hand is the sacrificer's stand-in transformed into a separate officiant. The two bodies that should be kept apart may then also be viewed as the fires of the two erstwhile competitors.<sup>42</sup>

We will come on a comparable situation, equally turning on the fire, when we discuss the consecrated soma sacrificer-to-be, the *dīkṣita*, and his arrival with the soma at the *śālā*. In the meantime the excursus on the two *hotṛs* and their election will have made clear that the one common Indo-Iranian term for sacrificial office originally did not designate an archetypal priest but a sacrificer maintaining his own fire. As a result of the competition with his likes he may have to submit to his rival and enter into a compact with him. In that case the *hotṛ* can be said to act as a priest, but even then he is still essentially a sacrificer who as such may reassert his rights at the next turn. At the same time this can also make us understand how later on, in the classical *śrauta* ritual, the *hotṛ*, and the other *hotṛakas* as well, could become professional priestly experts. At the start, however, when sacrifice was at the height of its vitality as the central institution, there does not seem to have been a corresponding institutional priesthood.

According to the admittedly scarce information about ancient Iran the situation there may not have been altogether different. True, in an often-quoted passage Herodotus reports that the Persians of his time (mid-fifth century B.C.) needed the cooperation of a priest, a *magos*, at their sacrifices.<sup>43</sup> But in his description the sacrifice itself appears to be very much a layman's affair. Immolation, cutting out the meat, cooking it, and laying it out on a grass bed (like the Indian *vedi*), the obligatory prayer for the well-being of ruler and realm, and finally taking the sacrificial viands home (there being no burnt oblation)—all these tasks were performed by the lay sacrificer. The *magos* only comes in to chant what is said to be a "theogony." Even today, among orthodox Zoroastrians in Iran where only few priests are available, the priestly function can be fulfilled by a lay sacrificer.<sup>44</sup>

The elaborate complexity of the *śrauta* ritual seems to rule out such an active and comprehensive part for the sacrificer who is reduced to all but a cipher, except for bearing the expenses and reaping the metaphysical benefits.<sup>45</sup> But in the domestic or *grhya* branch of the ritual the lay householder comes into his own as a fully and comprehensively active sacrificer. This is the more significant for the *grhya-śrauta* divide, which is, as we have seen, a late development. In many respects the *grhya* ritual has preserved the orig-

inal state of affairs, as our discussion of the *odana* ritual has shown.<sup>46</sup> But even the *śrauta* ritual shows telling traces of a nonprofessional priesthood. In the *sattra*, the long-lasting sacrificial “session,” each participant is at the same time both sacrificer and priest.

Professional priesthood—at least sacrificial priesthood as different from oracles, shamans, and other thaumaturges—was late in coming as a separate autonomous estate. This should caution us against too easily postulating a tripartite functional scheme of priests, warriors, and producers. What we observe is not a neat system of well-defined estates but, on the contrary, a principled interchange of roles and functions depending on the ever-changing outcome of the contest for the goods of life. This involved all and sundry not only priests and warriors but also commoners, the *viśaḥ* or the *vaiśya* who is “like an asura.” And even in the *śrauta* ritual the non-*ārya* still makes his appearance on the sacrificial grounds when he takes part in a tug-of-war with his *ārya* opponent in the *mahāvratā* festival.<sup>47</sup> After what we have seen of the sacrifice as the central institutional arena this should not surprise us. The world of sacrifice required skill and dexterity in the contest, verbal and otherwise, rather than professional expertise. It was only at the final collapse of the ancient world of sacrifice that sacrificial priesthood could come into its own.

### 5.3

But what about the brahmin? He is usually cast in the role of the archetypal priest because of his privileged knowledge of the Vedic corpus of priestly lore, and it seems difficult to imagine that he was ever anything else. In the first place, however, being a *brahman* or *brāhmaṇa* was originally an acquired quality that, since it was acquired, could be lost again; brahminhood in other words was interchangeable.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, it is significant that the *purohita* or domestic priest who assists his patron in a critical situation does not seem to have always been a brahmin. Thus the king of the Pañcālas, Keśin Dārbhya, turns to another king, the Kuru king Uccraiśravas Kauvayeya (who happens to be Keśin’s maternal uncle), to perform a sacrifice for him and thereby see him through a serious crisis.<sup>49</sup>

But what should put us on our guard is that, when we meet the classical, post-Vedic brahmin of the dharma texts, fully equipped with the paraphernalia of professional priesthood, the same dharma texts are explicit that he should *not* act as a priest but should cultivate his Vedic learning in, by, and for himself.<sup>50</sup> This is no doubt paradoxical, for the brahmin can hardly avoid putting his expertise at the disposal of a lay clientele to gain his livelihood. There is an irresolvable tension that forces the brahmin to ever-different attempts at squaring the circle. For the ideal is no less imperious

for being paradoxical. At any rate this should warn us against simply equating the brahmin with the priest. It may even reflect the original situation in which, as we will see, his predecessor was not a professional priest either.

Who then is the brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*) and how did he attain the pre-eminence that puts him on a par with the king? An obvious point to start from is the officiant called *brahman* (masc.) whose presence, like that of *hotṛ* and *adhvaryu*, is required at all *śrauta* sacrifices. His office is, however, a restricted one. In fact, its most conspicuous aspect is the restraint imposed on the *brahman*. The ritual texts particularly emphasize his silence. While the *hotṛ* officiant is performing with R̥gveda verses, the *adhvaryu* with the *yajus* formulas, and the chanters with the *sāman* chants, the *brahman* sits in silence. But this silent inactivity is nonetheless “half of the sacrifice,” for “the sacrifice has two tracks; one is by speech, the other by mind,” the latter being the *brahman*’s part in the ritual.<sup>51</sup> The counterpointing of ritual speech and ritual silence is no doubt deeply significant. Silence concentrates the power of speech as against its dispersal in being uttered. However, the problem for the ritualists was how to translate the *brahman*’s silence into ritual practice as a strenuous effort and not simply as relaxation. Silence or “holding the voice” (*vāgyamana*) had to be turned into a distinctive ritual act. But keeping silent while another officiant performs can hardly be counted as distinctive. And, moreover, it does not distinguish the *brahman* since the other officiants would equally have to “hold their voices.” The ritualists, therefore, interpret the silence as referring only to worldly (*laukika*) speech.<sup>52</sup> But this does not help, unless it is assumed that the *brahman* and the other officiants as well would normally chatter away happily while one of them is performing. More seriously, however, it would replace the meaningful opposition of ritual speech as against ritual silence with the quite different and in this context irrelevant one between ritual sound and worldly noise. Another, more truly ritualistic way to deal with the problem is to define precise time limits during which the rule of silence for the *brahman* obtains, after which he may apparently give in again to whatever talkative urges beset him.<sup>53</sup> But, as we saw, this does not solve the problem either.<sup>54</sup> So, as a last resort, it is stated that at the joints (*parus*) or the interstices (*antardhi*) between the various phases of the ritual, when the other officiants have stopped “passing the sacrifice to each other,” the sacrifice is with the *brahman*.<sup>55</sup> His rule of silence would then refer especially to those junctures. Although in principle there should be no extended pauses between the successive acts or blocks of acts, the connecting function of the *brahman* and his silence may, as we will see, bring us nearer to understanding his office.

The only conceivable way in which the *brahman*’s silence can be considered as a real and meaningful effort is the view of his office as that of an overseer silently keeping an overall check on the performance of the specialized officiants so as to be able to intervene with a reparatory rite in case of

mistakes. Such a task is indeed assigned to him and, given the intricacy of the fully developed ritual, it is an exacting one that requires full concentration. While the other officiants only operate with their own Vedas, the *brahman* must do so with all three.<sup>56</sup> He is then the healer (*bhīṣaj*) of the sacrifice, and as such he is in charge of the reparatory rites for putting the sacrifice together again when the proceedings have been breached by a mistaken move or faulty utterance.<sup>57</sup>

However, although it seems quite natural to assign the task of overseeing the proceedings and of repairing the all but unavoidable mistakes to the silent *brahman* officiant, this is not as general as one would expect. Thus the Taittirīya branch of the Yajurveda leaves the reparatory rites to its own officiant the *adhvaryu*. The rule seems to be proper to the ritual texts of the *hotrakas*, to which also the *brahman* originally belonged. Also the *brahman*'s silence is not as straightforward a characteristic of his office as it is made out to be. We noticed already that the ritualists had considerable difficulty turning his task into an office of silence. Actually, even in its classical form the *brahman*'s office is not so silent as the texts seem to emphasize. To his task fall the formulas for prompting (*prasava*) particular parts of the liturgy to be started,<sup>58</sup> while he also accompanies acts and offerings with his own murmured mantras (*anumantraṇa*) and is occasionally charged with a recitation or a chant.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the *brahman* does not seem to have been originally different from the other *hotṛs*. He is traditionally enumerated among the seven *hotrakas*, and one *brāhmaṇa* explicitly states that he should be a *bahvr̥ca*, that is, a Ṛgveda specialist.<sup>60</sup> As such he is associated with Indra-Bṛhaspati, as the *hotṛ* is with Agni and the *maitrāvaruṇa* with Mitra-Varuṇa. In the *śrauta* system this function is taken over by the *brāhmaṇācchamsin*, the praiser of (Indra as) *brahman*, who, although he is one of the *hotrakas* occupying a *dhiṣṇya* hearth, is still occasionally considered an acolyte of the *brahman*.<sup>61</sup> In the *pravara* ceremony of the soma ritual the *brāhmaṇācchamsin* is even solemnly addressed as *brahman*: "The *brahman* is Indra by virtue of [his] brahminhood (*brāhmaṇāt*)."<sup>62</sup> Taking its cue from the *pravara* formula the Śatapatha smoothly amalgamates the two now separate offices by explaining that Indra was awarded the *brāhmaṇācchamsin* office for guarding the gods' sacrifice against the asuras. And so, we are told, Indra sat on the south side—the south-north direction being the asuras' line of attack. Therefore the *brahman*—not the *brāhmaṇācchamsin*—has his seat on the southside, south of the *āhavanīya* hearth.<sup>63</sup> The Śatapatha's ratiocinative sleight of hand shows that the originally unity of the two offices was still clearly felt.

As was already observed by Herman Oldenberg, the office of the *brahman* in its classical form seems to be an innovation of the *śrauta* system.<sup>64</sup> Originally he was one of the *hotṛs* and as such included in the traditional septenary. The *śrauta* ritualists took him out from the *hotṛ* group, where he was succeeded by the *brāhmaṇācchamsin*, and built up his now separate of-

fice by elaborating on ritual silence—which in fact is no less part of the other officiants’ performance, but there may not have been much else to work on—and combining it with the healer’s function possibly derived from the domestic *purohita*, the “one put in front” to ward off evil and mishaps. In this latter role we see the *brahman* in the *śrauta* ritual seated south of the *āhavanīya*, facing the fire and “before,” that is, immediately east of, the sacrificer’s seat.

So, in the first instance, our search for the *brahman*’s identity must end in a draw. But it did provide some leads that may bring us further. In the first place his connective and healing function deserves further consideration. Second, his place among the *hotṛs* suggests that he was not an archetypal professional priest but a sacrificer in his own right interchanging his position with that of an officiant like the other *hotṛs*. In this connection his close association or rather near identity with Indra is particularly interesting.

#### 5.4

The *brahman*’s connective function comes out clearly, as we noticed, at the joints or interstices between blocks of rites. When the round of acts, recitations, and chants is completed and the officiants have stopped “passing the sacrifice round from the one to the other,” the sacrifice rests with the *brahman* who through his silence concentrates it in himself. In this way he carries the sacrifice over as it were to the next phase, which is started by his authorizing formula (*prasava*).

However, as already argued, we should be careful not to put too exclusive an emphasis on the *brahman*’s silence. It seems primarily to belong to the sphere of the cosmic power known as *brahman* (neut.), which refers to the inexpressed inner connection of the enigmatic or paradoxical formulation. Or, as Louis Renou felicitously put it, it is “l’énergie connective comprimée en énigmes.”<sup>65</sup> The silence of the inexpressed is essential. Explicitly stated, the solution would disperse the energy silently contained within the terms of the riddle or paradox and deprive it of its connective power. This is particularly relevant to the verbal contest known as *brahmodya*, in which the contenders fight each other with enigmatic formulations. The conclusion of the contest is at the same time the resolution of the enigma. Staking his all on his final statement the winning contestant imposes silence on his opponent. When at the end of the *brahmodya* in the horse sacrifice the winner, after a last paradox, conclusively states, “[I] this *brahman* am the highest extension of speech,”<sup>66</sup> he does not explicitly solve the enigma. Instead he puts himself on the line as the *brahman par excellence* and, therefore, the embodiment of the ultimate solution, the inner connection of the enigmatic paradox. The rest is silence.

Now it may not be too far fetched to view sacrifice indeed as a paradox-

ical enactment of the enigma of life and death. And it stands to reason that sacrifice is not seldomly equated with the *brahman* power. The *brahman* officiant can thus be seen as the embodiment of the secret of sacrifice. As we shall see, there are indications suggesting that such a view, far from being a wildly speculative mystico-symbolic interpretation, may once have had awesomely real underpinnings. But if this is the case, it does not explain the silence the ritualists implausibly assign to the *brahman* officiant. On the contrary, to assert himself as the embodiment of the “connective energy” contained in the enigma of sacrifice he must decisively involve himself in the sacrificial contest as he does in the verbal contest of the *brahmodya*. How he—or rather his predecessor—originally did so we will have to discuss further on. But as regards the emphasis placed by the ritualists on the classical *brahman*’s silence we must conclude that it was transferred from the *brahmodya*. In its original setting it was the result of the contest that itself was intensely verbal. Rejecting the contest the ritualists, as in the case of the *pravara*, only preserved its outcome, the resulting silence, which then had to be made into a specialized office. The uncertain process was replaced with its foregone conclusion. It was in the same way that the dynamic uncertainty of the sacrificial process was turned into the dead certainty of the static structure ordained by ritualism. But then the *brahman*’s office of static silence had to be split off from the verbally active *brāhmāṇacchamsin*. Even so the ritualists, as we saw, had a hard time to turn silence into a clearly defined office lasting from the start to the end.

What remains, though, is the connective function. We recognized this in the notion that the *brahman* officiant interconnects the successive sections of the ritual. He is, in other words, concerned with gaps, breaks, and breaches. This is particularly relevant for his healing function when he is called upon to put the broken sacrifice together again. The standard procedure of the *brahman*’s reparatory rite is to make a ghee libation in the *gārhapatya* with the utterance (*vyāhṛti*) *bhūh*, in the *āgnīdhriya* (in case of a soma sacrifice or otherwise in the *dakṣiṇāgni*) with *bhuvah* or in the *āhavanīya* with *svah*, depending on whether the mistake has occurred in the operations of the *hotṛ* with the Ṛgveda or of the *adhvaryu* with the Yajurveda or of the chanter with the Sāmaveda. Or, in case there is uncertainty as to which Veda is affected, the *brahman* should make an oblation in the *āhavanīya* with all three utterances, which are considered to stand for the three worlds as well as for the concentrated essence of the three Vedas. Explaining this procedure the Śatapatha says: “Thus one heals the Ṛgveda with the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda with the Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda with the Sāmaveda—exactly as one would put together joint with joint, so does he put together [the broken part of the sacrifice] by means of these utterances.”<sup>67</sup> This is, of course, a metaphor and a somewhat awkward one at that. But it goes to show that the *brahman* cannot put the joints together by silence



alone. In fact, elsewhere it is his murmured *anumantrana* after the main offering of boiled milk in the *pravargya* ritual that is said to heal the sacrifice.<sup>68</sup> But mostly it makes clear that the *brahman* is metaphorically viewed not as a charm worker or herb doctor but as a surgeon healing wounds and broken limbs or joints.

But what is the actual wound of the sacrifice that the *brahman* is to heal? His healing activity has, of course, been transformed into liturgical activity according to the restricted code of ritual acts and utterances. But the texts still allow us to discern what must have been meant. The wound, strange as it may seem at first sight, refers to the sacrificial food and more specifically to its “fore portion,” the *prāśitra*. After the main offering concluded with a burnt oblation for Agni *sviṣṭakṛt*, who “makes [the sacrifice] well-offered,” the so-called *idā* portions are cut from the sacrificial food of which the burnt oblations have been made. *Idā*—the goddess we have already met in the form of a cow representing the sacrificial meal—is invoked in a resounding litany, and finally the *idā* portions are eaten by the participants. But before these portions are cut and divided a minuscule morsel the size of a barleycorn or pippal berry is cut out and offered on a small wooden plate held by a handle to the *brahman*. This is the *prāśitra*. The point is that it represents the spot where the arrow of Rudra, the fierce hunter or herdsman that is the undomesticated counterpart of Agni, “pierced the sacrifice.” “The gods excluded Rudra from the sacrifice—understandably so, because of his dangerously undomesticated state—he pierced the sacrifice; the gods gathered round the [pierced sacrifice] thinking: This must be put in order for us; they said: ‘Well-offered (*sviṣṭa*) this will be for us when we conciliate this one’ [i.e., Rudra-Agni]; that is why Agni *sviṣṭakṛt* has his name; they cut out the pierced part the size of a barleycorn.” This the gods then brought first to Pūsan, whose teeth it knocked out, and finally to Brhaspati, the *brahman* among the gods, who with understandable apprehension but bracing himself with the relevant mantras successfully consumed the Rudra-pierced morsel.<sup>69</sup> The wound of the sacrifice, then, is explained as the sting of Rudra’s arrow, and the *brahman* heals it by taking over Rudra’s deadly sting by eating it.

Not only the *prāśitra* is directly connected with the wound or breach of sacrifice. The *idā* portions eaten by the participants have equally violent connotations. “The *idā* [rite] is as it were the part of the sacrifice that is torn asunder (*vyasta*);”<sup>70</sup> “they cut asunder (*vi-chindanti*) the sacrifice in that they eat from the middle [of the offering substance].”<sup>71</sup> And in a *brahmo-dya*-like ritualistic discussion it is stated that the *idā* herself cuts (*chinatti*) (the sacrifice).<sup>72</sup> But why should the meal be associated with tearing apart, cutting asunder, and generally with destructive violence? One is reminded of the “cutting of an oath” (*horkia pista temnein*) for sealing a covenant and of the no-less violent “striking a pact” (*foedus ferire*), well known from an-

cient Greece and Rome as well as from the Semitic world.<sup>73</sup> The “cutting” refers to the victim of the accompanying sacrifice. It is, at least in ancient Greece, a moot question as to whether the oath victim should or should not be eaten, but in the Indian world “‘eating’ an oath” is a fairly common expression. The *idā* rite is not an oath-taking ceremony but it does involve a compact between the rival parties in the sacrifice. Indeed the invocation of *Idā* is directly associated with the ongoing conflict of *devas* and *asuras* who contended for the *idā* cow by rival invocations (*vihava*). As a result “she turned to the gods, the cattle then ‘elected’ the gods, the cattle left the *asuras*.” And so the *hotṛ* officiant can deprive his patron of his cattle by performing the *idāhvāna* in the *asura* way.<sup>74</sup> Although the *idā* food does not put an end to the rivalry, it does unite the participants.

However, the *prāśitra* points to another not altogether unrelated explanation. The tearing or cutting asunder associated with the *idā* would seem to be no different from the wound caused by Rudra’s piercing arrow. That is, the *idā* portions—or the sacrificial meal they have replaced—holds the violent sting of death, for in order to be prepared the food must first be killed. With the food given and eaten, death is transferred to the other party. Sacrifice highlights the critical nature of the giving and accepting of food—hence the often-expressed idea of being weighed down or even poisoned by the food and gifts of the sacrificial patron.<sup>75</sup> Here we may recall that *Idā*, the daughter of the primordial sacrificer *Manu*, was claimed and sacrificed by *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*.<sup>76</sup> As the sacrificial *idā* cow she is therefore also known as *maitrāvaruṇī*. And as *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* did, so does the successful sacrificer whom we recognized in the background of the classical *maitrāvaruṇa* officiant. It is then the *brahman*’s function to accept and neutralize the sting of death. It is in this way that we can understand how he is the *bhīṣaj*, the healer of the sacrifice.

In this connection it is interesting that in the lapidary exclamations of the *idāhvāna* *Idā* is not only invoked as *maitrāvaruṇī*; she is also closely associated or even equated with the “god-made *brahman* power.” “Hither is called *Idā* [pause], the daughter of *Manu* with the ghee dripping footprint, the *maitrāvaruṇī*, the god-made *brahman* [power] is called hither.”<sup>77</sup> The sacrificial food—of which *Idā* is the divine representation—is elsewhere even directly identified with the *brahman* power. When the *anvābhārya* food that is to be offered to the officiants as their *dakṣiṇā* is placed on the *vedi* the *brahman* officiant should touch it while saying: “O *Brahman*, thou art *Brahman*, to *Brahman* thee.”<sup>78</sup>

Incidentally, it is not devoid of interest that the royal sacrificer, at his enthronement after his victorious chariot raid, is proclaimed *brahman* in almost the same words.<sup>79</sup> When we further consider that the *idā* is called the “godmade *brahman*,” there is an almost explicit connection with the ideas concerning sacrificial food. The essential point would seem to be that

to become the sustenance of life food has to pass through death, like the immolated *idā* cow; and so, in mysterious fashion, has the royal sacrificer—in fact, any sacrificer.<sup>80</sup> *Brahman*, then, appears to be intimately connected with the passage through death. It is the link between life and death. This, the link between life and death, is the riddle of *brahman*.

No less interesting is the point that the *anvāhārya* food, offered to the officiants after the *idā* portions, is said to heal the rent (*chidra*) in the sacrifice, which, as we have seen, is caused by the *idā* rite.<sup>81</sup> It may seem strange that food should heal the wound caused by food. But what it comes down to is that those who accept and eat the food take over the burden of the killing involved in its preparation. In that sense the *anvāhārya* heals the “rent” of the *idā* and so can be addressed, like *Idā*, as *brahman*. The sacrificial food is the substance of *brahman*.<sup>82</sup> It is both the “rent of sacrifice” and its healing. The *brahman* power contained in the food is the enigmatic pivot of life and death, the stake in the dicing contest of the *agnyādheya*, where the participants gamble for shares in an *anvāhārya*-like *odana*. In short, it is the common concern that brings the rival parties together.<sup>83</sup>

The connectiveness of the *brahman* officiant rests on the very same pivotal ambivalence mediating between life and death. The focal point of his office is neither his silence nor his speaking his *prasava* or *anumantraṇa*. Nor is it to be found in his figurative healing of the broken joints. The fulcrum of his office is the *prāśitra*. Consuming the burden of death that knocked out Puṣan’s teeth, cut off the hands of Savitr, and blinded Bhaga, he sets life free. The *brahman*’s office is the office of death that should ensure life. One readily understands that this office should be shrouded in silence. But its essence is in the eating.

Properly speaking the function of accepting and eating the sacrificer’s food and thereby taking charge of its *onus* belongs to the invited participants or, put differently, to the rival *hotṛs* who have submitted and united under their “elected” patron, not to just one of them. The connective function, on the other hand, belonged to the successful *hotṛ* sacrificer who had overcome death and so had shown himself to be the embodied *brahman*. The original *brahman* was not an officiant but the victorious sacrificial contender. However, when the ritualists broke up the contest structure of sacrifice, they split the undifferentiated group of contenders into a number of well-defined specialized offices, including that of the sacrificer. As the *brahman* was lifted out of the *hotṛs*—his place being taken by the now equally specialized *brāhmaṇācchamsin*—so the *prāśitra* was taken out of the sacrificial meal and its consumption turned into a “technical” office.<sup>84</sup> The silence surrounding the ominous aspect of death as well as the victory of the superior *brahmavādin*, whose silence spelled death to his opponent, materially became part of the *brahman*’s office. And so was the servile function of healing or preventing evil. Hence the well-known ambivalence of the later

brahmin, both immeasurably exalted as the holder of the *brahman* power and utterly dependent as a priestly servant. Indeed, as David Shulman has convincingly argued, the *brahman*'s untouchable purity may turn around to the untouchable's pollution.<sup>85</sup>

By creating the *brahman*'s office as a technical function like that of any other officiant the ritualists defused the tense, even violent opposition between host and guests to the point of making it meaningless. Death was no longer between them. Instead there was the specialized office of eating the diminutive "fore portion." The primordial transgression of sacrifice became the error against the unforgiving order of ritualism. The erstwhile triumphant *hotṛ* sacrificer and embodiment of the connective *brahman* in the still center of sacrifice—like the *śreṣṭhin*, the superior who presides silently over the feast while his guests try to know his unuttered speech—became a functionary correcting technical mistakes.<sup>86</sup> What remained was the association with food, the classical brahmin being the archetypal guest of honor.

## 5.5

His concern with sacrificial death makes the *brahman* into a truly priestly figure, even more so than the *hotṛ* or any other officiant. Consuming its death burden he desacralizes the food. But his elaborately construed office does not present us with the archetype of a separate institutional priesthood. His origin as one of the *hotṛs* makes him a sacrificer as well as a priest. Instead of a priesthood we find a regular interchange of the two roles of priest and patron. Who will be patron, who priest, is each time decided by the conventional contest among a number of aspiring sacrificers. The others accept the patronage of the successful contender, eat his food, and accept his gifts. In that sense they are his "priests," but they strive to reverse the roles and come out as the sacrificial patron at the next turn. Incidentally, it stands to reason that the successful patron will have no dearth of aspirants eager to enter his service and "cause him to sacrifice" (*yājayati*)—the classical phrase for being someone's priest in the *śrauta* ritual. But this will not stop the aspirant from striving for the patron's position.<sup>87</sup>

This means that instead of looking at the *brahman* alone we must shift the focus to the relationship between *brahman* and sacrificer. We already noticed the near identity of the *brahman* and the warrior god Indra in the formula of the *brāhmaṇācchamsin's pravara*. "The *brahman* is Indra by virtue of [his] brahminhood." Indra's *brahman* quality is far from an isolated feature. In the soma ritual it is also clearly stated in the *subrahmanyā* invocation by which Indra is summoned to the soma feast. After a number of epithets recalling his virility and amorous feats he is specifically addressed as *brāhmaṇa*. It is then hardly surprising to find Indra also being elected as the divine *hotṛ* in the *pravara* of the soma ritual. While in the paradigm of

the *īṣṭi* and the independent animal sacrifice the *hotṛ* is the human representative of Agni, in the soma ritual, it is Indra with whom he is equated: “Indra in virtue of his *hotṛ* office, together with Heaven and Earth,” as the formula has it. In this *pravara*, where the full complement of seven *hotṛs* (and the sacrificer) is elected, Indra turns up again a second time addressed as the *brahman*—“the *brahman* is Indra in virtue of his *brahman* office”—in the election of the *brāhmaṇācchamsin*.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand we find Indra often identified with the sacrificer, especially in the soma ritual.<sup>89</sup> As we have come to expect, the roles of *brahman*, *hotṛ*, and sacrificial patron are here again interchangeable and so are clustered in a single figure, Indra, the presiding deity of the soma sacrifice.

Yet the relationship of the sacrificer with the *hotṛ* is essentially different from his relationship with the *brahman*. While the *hotṛ* in the *īṣṭi*, or the *maitrāvaruṇa* in the animal and soma sacrifice, can be characterized as a double of the sacrificer, the *brahman* is in many ways the reverse or mirror image of the sacrificer. On the other hand the two are strikingly similar. The rules for entering or leaving the ritual compound, as well as the path they should take when moving around within it, are the same. Equally the prescriptions for the *brahman*’s silence also pertain to the sacrificer, while both have to accompany the liturgical acts with their murmured *anumantraṇa*.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, however, they are each other’s exact opposites and as such complementary. In simple terms, the one is the recipient of the other’s food. And—less simple but perfectly consistent—the recipient thereby takes over, as we saw, the burden of death from the donor. Sacrificer and *brahman* exemplify the complementary roles of the host and guest parties we have encountered already in the sacrificial competition of the mythic Ādityas and Aṅgirasas.<sup>91</sup> This complementary pair is also present in the domestic sacrifice (*pākayajña*) where, as we are told, the householder-sacrificer is the *hotṛ* and the only officiant is the *brahman*.<sup>92</sup> In the *śrauta* ritual their opposition is also spatially made visible. At the *īṣṭi* the *hotṛ* has his place in the northwest corner, while the *brahman* is seated diagonally opposite, at the southeast end.<sup>93</sup> Against this background we can also understand that the *brahman* is said to perform half of the sacrifice or to be in charge of the other of the “two tracks” of sacrifice and therefore entitled to half of the *dakṣiṇā* wealth to be distributed.<sup>94</sup> The point that opposes as well as binds them is death. Between them they play out the enigmatic life-death nexus, the substance of which is food.

The *brahman*’s complementary opposition to the sacrificer puts him on a par with the contending *hotṛs*. And as we saw, he did indeed originally belong to them, before the ritualists set him apart and made him into the eater *par excellence* as the recipient of the *prāśitra*. But the *brahman* still shows a particular trait that suggests his relationship with the sacrificer to have been different from that of the *hotṛ* even before the ritualistic recon-

struction. I am referring to the *brahman's pravara*. In the first place it is to be noted that he is not included in the *hotṛ* election. Although we saw his divine counterpart invoked as Indra in the *pravara* of the seven *hotṛs* in the soma ritual; the relevant formula refers not to the *brahman* officiant but to the *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin*. The *brahman's* solemn installation takes place already early in the morning of the day on which the actual sacrifice is to take place,<sup>95</sup> while the *hotṛ's pravara* comes right before the central part of the ritual when the sacrifice is reaching its climax.<sup>96</sup> It seems likely that the classical *brahman* officiant has taken the place of another participant, different from the *hotṛs*, whose early entry on the scene was essential. One may think here of the domestic *purohita*. And indeed, when elected he takes up his place literally “put before,” that is, immediately to the east of the sacrificer’s seat south of the *āhavanīya*. But it is then not clear why he should be “elected” or installed since he would anyway be there and an “election” would be rather superfluous.

A clue as to the character of this participant entering early on the sacrificial scene seems to be contained in the *brahman's pravara* formula: “O Lord of the Earth, Lord of the World, Lord of the great Creation (*bhūpate, bhuvanapate, mahato bhūtasya pate*), Thou we elect [to be] the *brahman*.” The *brahman* responds by murmuring: “I am Lord of the Earth, I am Lord of the World, I am Lord of the great Creation.”<sup>97</sup> These words strikingly resemble the way Rudra is addressed at the conclusion of the domestic *sūlagava* (“spit ox”) sacrifice.<sup>98</sup> The *brahman* officiant, then, is equated with the god Rudra. Or, in different terms, as the *hotṛ* stands for Agni, so the *brahman* represents the threatening Rudra form of the fire. This corresponds with his eating the *prāśitra*, which is Rudra’s part, for to him belongs “the injury of the sacrifice”—that is, of course, of the victim.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, if the *brahman* is the “healer of the sacrifice,” he is so because of the dangerously ambiguous nature of Rudra, the robber and killer as much as the guardian of cattle.

His association with death richly endowed the *brahman* with the sacral potential for the development of a full-blown sacrificial priesthood. However, the actual development did not follow out this line to its logical consequence. Nor did his descendent, the generalized brahmin (*brāhmaṇa*), unequivocally develop into a priest—rather, he opted out of the priesthood, leaving its elements dispersed throughout the layman’s world from the king to the untouchable. We may, however, retain the *brahman's* association with death and with Rudra’s world of the wilderness.

## 5.6

In Vedic ritual priestly sacrality does not rest with the officiant, not even with the *brahman*, notwithstanding the ubiquitous references to the enig-

matic *brahman* power. Insofar as the texts give scope to it, sacrality is only fully recognizable in the *yaṇamāna*, the sacrificer at whose expense and for whose benefit the ritual—in which he has only a very limited part to play—is performed. He, not the officiant, has to submit to purification and to restrictive rules of dress, diet, and bodily care, calculated to safeguard a state of sanctity. Nothing of the kind is required of the brahmin officiant. The contrast stands out clearest in the case of the soma sacrificer who first must undergo the *dikṣā*, the consecration, which is no less than a full-fledged initiation.

It has been supposed that the brahmin officiant is constitutionally in the required state of purity and sanctity and so is not in need of any purification or rules to qualify him for his function.<sup>100</sup> But this explanation is clearly insufficient. In the first place it seems striking that the texts are silent on the rules one would expect to ensure the maintenance of the officiant's purity or to restore it when impaired. By contrast, for his Zoroastrian counterpart elaborate purification is obligatory. But the argument of the brahmin being entitled to officiate without more ado decisively founders on the fact that if he himself is the sacrificer he has to submit to the consecration in precisely the same way as the nonbrahmin sacrificer.<sup>101</sup> The one figure clearly invested with priestly sacrality is the sacrificer, especially the *dikṣita* who is going to offer the soma sacrifice. We must, therefore, look further into the *dikṣā*.

Who then is the *dikṣita*? Properly speaking he is not yet a sacrificer. According to the basic paradigm of the soma ritual he is four days before the actual soma sacrifice—the *sutyā* or soma pressing day—consecrated in the *dikṣā* ceremony. This involves an extensive purification of the prospective sacrificer and his wife.<sup>102</sup> Hair and nails are cut, a solemn bath is administered, unguents are applied to the body, new clothes are donned, the face is wiped with bundles of darbha grass—this being the standard ritualistic way of purifying—and finally, after an *iṣṭi*, the *dikṣita* is given the attributes of his special status, a girdle, a staff (*daṇḍa*, later to be handed over to the *maitrāvaruṇa*), an upper garment, a turban (*uṣṇīṣa*), a black antelope skin (*kṛṣṇājina*), and an antelope horn. The nature of the *dikṣita*'s status is illustrated by the many rules for his conduct. Apart from the general rules for a sacrificer—abstention from meat and sexual intercourse—he should not rise for anybody or greet anybody, not even the king, his teacher, or his father-in-law whom he normally should show respect. On the other hand he is to be shown respect by them, but nobody should touch him or mention his name. Nor should one accept his food or clothes. In fact, he is in no position to offer food or hospitality because as a *dikṣita* he is not to prepare any food or, what comes down to the same, to offer sacrifice.

The tenor of the severe restrictions is that the *dikṣita* is taken out from his human condition, socially deactivated, and set apart in a nonhuman, in

some respects even subhuman state. This is also demonstrated by the rules regarding his speech. He should not speak in a straight human manner but in a roundabout or indistinct way.<sup>103</sup> Briefly the nonhuman or subhuman condition of the *dikṣita* is that of an embryo, a point much stressed by our texts.<sup>104</sup> The *dikṣita* experiences a second birth through sacrifice. The antelope horn—used for digging and scratching—is said to represent the womb from which he is to be reborn as Indra. It is addressed with the words: “Thou art the womb of Indra” at the consecration and again when the *dikṣita* discards it, signifying his ritual rebirth at the height of the *sutyā* day.<sup>105</sup> But to be reborn he must also undergo death. “When they consecrate him he dies a second time.”<sup>106</sup> So the *dikṣita* is in the typically sacral state between life and death.

In itself the notion of death and rebirth, of life out of death, is far from surprising. It is inherent in the concepts of consecration and initiation. What concerns us here is that it recalls the *brahman*’s association with sacrificial death and the new life it is to bring about. And this is exactly what the ritual tells us. At the conclusion of the *dikṣā* rites the *dikṣita* is announced three times softly inside the *śālā* and then three times loudly outside with the words: “Consecrated is the *brāhmaṇa* so-and-so,” irrespective of whether he is a brahmin, a kṣatriya, or a vaiśya.<sup>107</sup> So the *dikṣā* makes the sacrificer closely resemble the *brahman*. When we further consider that the *dikṣita* is to be born as Indra and that in the soma ritual Indra is, as we have seen, the divine counterpart of the *brahman* and of the sacrificer, the sacrificer and the *brahman* officiant, instead of being complementary, as we first surmised, come to look like identical twins. But why this doubling? Are they indeed so exactly similar?

The relationship of the sacrificer with the *brahman* officiant is less straightforward than the identification of Indra, sacrificer, and *brahman*, suggested by the *pravara* and the *dikṣita* proclamation, makes us expect. The identification—the ritualists’ premier technique—short-circuits what originally was a process of tension, conflict, and resolution. Ritualism does away with the process and its uncertainties in favor of the outcome, the resolution of the conflict. The final resolution is taken as a foregone conclusion and therefore has to be fully represented at the very beginning and throughout the whole of the ritual. This seems also to be the case with the *dikṣita* being explicitly proclaimed a *brāhmaṇa*. The point is that the *dikṣita* is represented as an embryo to be ultimately reborn out of the *brahman* power activated by the sacrifice.<sup>108</sup> It is only then that he can be fully regarded as the *brahman* who has victoriously come out of his indistinct embryonic state and manifests himself as the human Indra. The *dikṣita*’s *brāhmaṇa* proclamation, however, jumps the line, leaves out the embryonic stage, and forthwith endows the sacrificer-to-be with the *brāhmaṇa* quality to which he still has to be born. Unless we take *brāhmaṇa* to refer to the



embryonic condition, the process has been replaced by its foregone conclusion.

Now one might argue that the concept of the *brahman* power, present but itself unexpressed in the enigmatic formulations of the *brahmodya* contest, is closely related to the inarticulate condition of the embryo. It could then further be argued that Indra's *brahman* quality derives from his embryonic stage followed by his birth and triumphant manifestation. Put simply, before being born as Indra he was a *brāhmaṇa*, that is, an embryo. This is not entirely implausible. There is a good deal of mystery and equivocation surrounding Indra, who often is at first absent or hidden and has to be brought to manifestation by the *viḥava*, the rival invocation, of the contending parties.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the *brahman* is said to be the womb (*yonī*) out of which the royal power (*kṣatra*) arises.<sup>110</sup> Indra, being the divine representative of the *kṣatra*, can thus be seen as being born from the *brahman*—as the sacrificer is said to be. However, we should be careful not to equate Indra's and the sacrificer's brahminhood exclusively with the embryonic condition. The victorious contestant in the *brahmodya* of the horse sacrifice who proudly declares himself to be the embodiment of the cosmic riddle—"this *brahman* is the highest extension of speech"—certainly has nothing of the embryo's inarticulate condition. He is, on the contrary, triumphantly manifest and articulate.

Significantly, not all the older texts have the *dikṣita* proclaimed a *brāhmaṇa*. In fact only the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, followed by the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, does so.<sup>111</sup> The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa also prescribes the *brāhmaṇa* clause, arguing that the one who undertakes to perform sacrifice embodies *ipso facto* the *brahman* power, even if he be a *kṣatriya*.<sup>112</sup> In the latter case he is lent the pedigree of his brahmin *purohita*, which is then added to his name in the proclamation—a practice that properly belongs to the *pravara* of the *hotṛ* when the fire of the sacrificer's ancestors is invoked. In this light the insertion of the word *brāhmaṇa*, here underpinned by the use of the *purohita*'s descent line, distinctly looks like an innovation. Moreover, the closely related Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa argues against this practice and pares down the proclamation to the single word "Consecrated," without name or qualification, let alone the pedigree. "The *dikṣita* is a divine embryo; one does not give a name to an unborn embryo; therefore one does not utter his name."<sup>113</sup> It is clear that the *dikṣita*'s being styled *brāhmaṇa* cannot be taken at face value. But even when we discount his *brāhmaṇa* title, he is still the one truly sacral figure. His consecration does not make him a *brahman* or *brāhmaṇa* but prepares him to become one through the ensuing sacrifice. It is this as yet undecided betwixt-and-between status that made for his sacrality.

This conclusion is confirmed by the royal consecration (*rājasūya*), especially by its central part, the consecratory bath or shower (*abhiṣeka*). The

*dikṣā* is in fact a reduced and generalized version of the royal *abhiṣeka*.<sup>114</sup> Now among the mantras accompanying the *abhiṣeka* or proclaiming the consecration of the royal sacrifice no mention is made of his connection with the *brahman* power.<sup>115</sup> This connection is, however, made explicit at a later stage. Seated on a throne the royal sacrificer is surrounded by the officiants and the household officers (the *ratnins*). Then the sacrificer addresses each of the four chief officiants in turn—*adhvaryu*, *hotṛ*, *udgātṛ*, and *brahman*—saying: “O *brahman*,” whereupon the one addressed responds with “Thou, o king, art *brahman*.” Each of the four officiants adds to this the identification with a god, respectively, Savitr (the Quickener), Indra, Mitra, and Varuṇa. Incidentally, it is the *brahman* officiant who pronounces the king’s identification with Indra—“Thou art Indra of true force.” Here then the sacrificer is unequivocally acclaimed not as a brahmin but as the *brahman par excellence*.

But this acclamation is separated from the consecratory bath by another significant episode, a chariot drive, similar to the full-scale chariot race in the *vājapeya*. This is not just a sporting event. Some texts conflate it with a symbolic cattle raid.<sup>116</sup> Here Indra and the *brahman* power are again given their due. On his return the sacrificer says: “Being united to thee, o Indra, may we not go asunder through loss of *brahman*.” At this point, however, there is as yet no definite identification. Unison with Indra is hoped for, and the *brahman* power may still elude the sacrificer. For our present purpose, however, the important point is that the intervening chariot-drive-cum-cattle-raid parallels the *dikṣita*’s *sanīyācana*, collecting the goods and chattels needed for the coming sacrifice.<sup>117</sup> The seemingly harmless *sanīyācana* here shows its true colors; it is an undisguised raiding affair recalling the elaborate raiding and conquest circuit preceding the horse sacrifice. This also explains why the *dikṣita*, in case the place of sacrifice is elsewhere, should set out on a chariot or at least with a token part of a chariot. It is the impoverished remnant of the royal chariot-borne raid. But even so the *dikṣita* is known to be *siṣāsu*, bent on booty, especially cattle.<sup>118</sup>

The full scenario, which the *dikṣā* preserves only in a compressed form, is then consecratory bath (*apsu dikṣā* or *abhiṣeka*), raiding to collect the goods to be spent in sacrifice, and finally, after the goods for sacrifice have been won, the sacrificial festival that culminates in the acclamation of the successful sacrificer as *the brahman* who integrates in himself the four gods Savitr, Indra, Mitra, and Varuṇa. Mitra and Varuṇa we have already met as the archetypal sacrificers who “make” the cow that provides the sacrificial meal. Indra, equally a sacrificer, is especially noted for conquering the goods of sacrifice and distributing them in his capacity of *maghavan*, the bountiful. Savitr, the “Impeller, or Quickener,” is as such essential to all sacrificial acts and is accordingly given, as usually, the first place. Interestingly some texts also include Rudra among the four gods and drop the

friendly Mitra, thereby giving the sacrificer for all his bountifulness a less than benevolent countenance. This Rudra aspect the sacrificer shares with the *brahman* officiant will come into view again in the next chapter, when we will meet the relatives of the *dikṣita*.

The upshot of our discussion of the *brahman* and his relation with the sacrificer is that we have been looking in vain for the archetypal priest. Although the *brahman* officiant through his association with sacrificial death comes nearest to priestly sacrality, his sacral capacity did not lead to the development of a true priesthood. Instead he was “desacralized” as a ritual officiant. The only truly sacral figure is an entirely different one, the *dikṣita* who is neither a priest nor, as yet, a sacrificer. And although he hopes to become one in the end, he is, in spite of the ritualists’ premature effort to make him one, not yet a *brāhmaṇa* either. But being related to both *brahman* and sacrificer he holds the key to their relationship. So we shall have to look further into the affairs of the *dikṣita*.

## *The Consecrated*

### 6.1

IT HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED that the *dikṣita* is strikingly similar to the *brahmacārin*, classically known as the young “Veda student.”<sup>1</sup> Both are equipped with the antelope skin, the girdle, and the staff; they resemble each other in dress and they are subjected to the same rules and restrictions regarding diet and behavior (notably no honey, meat, or spirits and no sexual intercourse). Like the *brahmacārin* the *dikṣita* has not yet attained the full status of the *brahman*. As the *dikṣita* is going to be reborn from the sacrifice three days later, so the *brahmacārin* is said to be born a *brāhmaṇa* on the third day after his *upanayana*, his induction with the teacher who is during the three intervening days “pregnant” with his pupil.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this three-day period is considered to stand for a year, and it is even stated that previously the *sāvitṛi* verse, as the epitome of Vedic lore, was taught only after a year, this teaching signifying the second birth that the *upanayana*, like the *dikṣā*, is meant to bring about.<sup>3</sup>

The close resemblance, almost amounting to identity, with the *brahmacārin* offers a clear and simple explanation of the *dikṣita*’s relationship with the *brahman*. He is in search of this capacity that he still must win. But there is, on the face of it, an obvious difference between *upanayana* and *dikṣā*. In the latter case there is no teacher, and it is hard to see which knowledge or wisdom the *dikṣita* is pursuing. Also the aspect of fosterage, patronage, or adoption that is clearly visible in the *upanayana* seems to be missing in the *dikṣā*. Nor should we overlook the fact that the yearlong “pregnancy” is left out of consideration in the *dikṣā*. Though we had occasion to note yearlong consecration periods, it is the “embryonic” condition of the *dikṣita* that gets the limelight, not “pregnancy.” Yet if we look further into the *upanayana*, it may originally not have been so far apart from the *dikṣā* or rather from its preclassical form. At any rate we must discount the specific and well-defined functions that classical theory has assigned them.

Memorizing large masses of text—as different from mastering the sophisticated conventions or models of *brahman* formulations, the rhetorical

skill required by “Pénigme essentielle du vedisme ancien,” as Louis Renou has called it—can only have become the all but exclusive task of the *brahmacārin* in the context of late Vedic ritualism with its unchangeable corpus of ritual and mantra. But the overriding feature is not so much the learning as the daily services the *brahmacārin* must render to his teacher and patron. These are primarily tending the fire—the first act of the pupil is to put fuel on the teacher’s fire—and collecting food for the teacher by begging, which reminds us of the *sanihāras* the *dikṣita* sends out to collect the goods for sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> But the most telling instance of the *brahmacārin*’s servility is the story of Satyakāma Jābāla, whose unsparing truthfulness about his unknown patrilineal descent—Jābāla being his metronymic—moved the teacher forthwith to engage him as his pupil notwithstanding the lack of a proper patriline. But the striking point of the story is that the neophyte is not taught anything at all. Instead he is put in charge of a poor-looking herd of four hundred meager and weak cows with strict orders not to return before they should have multiplied to a healthy-looking herd of a thousand. “So he went abroad for a couple of years.”<sup>5</sup> Of course, Satyakāma does receive his instruction in the end but only after the *brahman* has been revealed to him by the bull of his now healthy, multiplied herd, the fire, a haṃsa bird, and a mallard, each of whom reveals to him one quarter. On his return with the thousand head of cattle, when the teacher notices that Satyakāma must have had a revelation of the *brahman*, he is finally given full instruction.<sup>6</sup>

The story may well reflect an ancient initiation pattern of setting out into the wild where the one to be initiated has a decisive revelatory experience followed by his return and reintegration on the level of his newly acquired status. For our present purpose we should retain the aspects of servility and of nomadic mobility. While servility does not seem to fit in comfortably with the classical picture of the *dikṣita* who does not acknowledge anybody’s superiority, we have come to recognize transhumance and nomadic mobility as the underlying pattern of the soma ritual even in its classical standard paradigm of the *agnistoma*.<sup>7</sup>

Now the pupil’s life in the teacher’s household appears to have been generally broken in periods of four to six months, between the summer and winter solstice.<sup>8</sup> The time of the sun’s northern course would seem to have been reserved for particular sacrificial texts.<sup>9</sup> What is of particular interest to us is that these texts—mostly to be found in the *āranyakas* or “wilderness texts”—require a setting out from the settled community into the wild, while they are accompanied by certain restrictive observances (*vrata*), such as the usual abstention from meat and sexual intercourse. It is not surprising that the domestic manuals of the Maitrāyaṇīyas call these observances simply *dikṣā*, while the concluding libation is termed *uddikṣā*.<sup>10</sup> The following special “consecrations” are listed: the *cāturhantrkī*, concerned with the

so-called four-*hotṛ* formulas, the *āgnikī*, which is closely related to the *pravarṅya* ritual, itself associated with the imparting of an unspecified “secret doctrine” (*rahasya*), and the *āśvamedhikā* related to the horse sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

Although these vows or observances are ostensibly meant somehow to facilitate the memorization of particular texts, one is at a loss to understand why these, in preference to other texts, should need such special measures. Nor do the texts tell us. If we look further into these special consecrations—or rather the span of time between the “consecration” and the *uddikṣā* at its end—it would seem that they are concerned with sacrificial activity into which the memorization is inserted. The *cāturhauṛkī* we do indeed encounter as a full-fledged sacrifice in which these formulas are offering verses, as they are when being taught.<sup>12</sup> In principle there does not seem to be much difference between their teaching and their actual use. The case of the *āśvamedhikā* speaks for itself and, indeed, the Vārāha Gṛhyasūtra straightforwardly refers to the śrautasūtra where “the *āśvamedha* has been expounded.”<sup>13</sup>

The most interesting case, however, is the Maitrāyaṇīyas’ *āgnikī dīkṣā*. It starts with two series of ghee libations in the fire. The mantras for these libations are those that also occur at the start of the *agnicayana*—the first set for the ghee libations to be made when setting out on the expedition (originally the raid) to fetch the clay for fire pot and bricks. The second set belongs to the special consecration of the *cayana* sacrificer, that is, indeed, an igneic *dīkṣā*.<sup>14</sup> The further course of the Maitrāyaṇīyas’ *dīkṣā* of the pupil suggests an abridged version of the soma paradigm (performed at the brick altar) that is epitomized by three jars with water for each of the three soma pressing rounds of the *sutyā* day.<sup>15</sup> This same parallelism with the soma and brick altar ritual is also found elsewhere in the domestic manual of the Mānava-Maitrāyaṇīyas. This branch deals with *brahmacarya* and *upanayana* in two separate places. First, right at the manual’s beginning, the rules of conduct for the *brahmacārin* are given. Then, after the extensive treatment of the wedding ceremony, the *upanayana* is given its place among the subsequent life-cycle rites of the married partners’ offspring.<sup>16</sup> Now the first part, the *brahmacārin*’s general rules of conduct (*vrata*), is followed by two rites called *antarakalpa*, “intermediate rite,” and *agnipravartana*, “moving the fire forward.”<sup>17</sup> The *antarakalpa*, unknown elsewhere, is a consecratory bath comparable to the *apsu dīkṣā* of the soma ritual. “Then,” so the next section starts, “they move the fire forward,” which is further detailed as a moving out of the settled village to the east or north of it. There the fire is set up, and ghee libations are made in it. Interestingly these libations and the accompanying mantras are the same as those of the *āgnikī dīkṣā*. So the *āgnikī dīkṣā*, ostensibly meant to introduce the memorization of particular (unspecified) texts after the conclusion (*utsarjana*) of the regular “teaching term,” turns out to be the same as the *agnipravartana*, which equally fol-

lows the conclusion of the regular term.<sup>18</sup> Or rather, the consecratory bath of the *antarakalpa* and the subsequent *agnipravartana* seem to be summarily repeated by the so-called *āgnikī dīkṣā*. And these again present a double parallel to the complex of the *dīkṣā* bath followed by the igneic *avāntara-dīkṣā*, known from the paradigm of the soma ritual.<sup>19</sup> What this tiresome detail comes down to is that the pupil's activities during the northern course of the sun are in fact those of the consecrated soma sacrificer-to-be.

A few words on the *avāntaradīkṣā* in the soma ritual should help to clarify the similarity as well as the difference between *brahmacārin* and *dīkṣita*. In itself the "intermediate consecration" is in no way impressive. It consists in the *dīkṣita* undertaking some additional observances, to wit, "tightening his girdle," tightening his fist (which he kept already closed since the aquatic consecration, so as to evoke the notion of being in an embryonic state); his milk food should be boiling hot and he should only use boiling water. It is, however, part of the pastoral *pravargya* complex that involves the making of a fired clay pot (called "great hero," *mahāvīra*, or simply *gharma*, "heat"), putting it on the fire till it is red hot, so as to produce a spectacular flash shooting up when ghee is poured in it, and finally cooling the pot again by pouring milk in it (producing a no less impressive pillar of steam).

Even without going into particulars it is clear that the *pravargya* ritual is closely related to the rites of the brick altar with which it shares the proceedings of fetching the clay, the manufacture of a fired clay pot and the concern with the "head of the sacrifice" (real ones under the brick altar, an imaginary head represented by the *mahāvīra* pot of the *pravargya*). What is relevant to our present purpose, however, is that this ritual is given by the Maitrāyaṇīyas as the initiation if not the actual content or enactment of the "mystery," the *rahasya*.<sup>20</sup> Incidentally, though we are not told which texts holding the *rahasya* should be introduced in this way, we may feel reasonably sure that the mystery refers to the sacrificial heads and the uncertainty as to how they are to be procured and by whom—an uncertainty that, as we saw, was turned into a principled impossibility. In other words, chances are that the "mystery" is no other than the *śiṣṭavidyā* we already encountered.<sup>21</sup> At all events, however, the already thin line between teaching particular (but, significantly, unspecified) texts, whether "secret" or otherwise, and performing the ritual to which these texts pertain is in the present case of the *pravargya* and its *rahasya* blurred, if it is there at all. Rather the "secret" knowledge or the mystery is being enacted and its resolution acted out.

The domestic *dīkṣās* of the Maitrāyaṇīyas show us the remnants of an ancient, undifferentiated complex concerned with the cult of the fire and involving at least two parties, one of which had to undergo a consecration by water and fire. The ritualistic breakthrough and the resultant reform and

reorganization operated a divide between the learning by rote of the fixed text corpus as part of the *grhya* ritual on the one hand and the *śrauta* rituals, especially those of the soma beverage, the brick altar, the *pravargya*, and the horse sacrifice (themselves the broken and separately reworked parts of the ancient complex) on the other. In this way we can also explain that the *avāntaradikṣā* turns up in two versions, as part of the soma ritual and as the imparting or memorization of the *pravargya* texts—reminding us of the same doubling of actual ritual (*antarakalpa* and *agnipravartana*, as against the teaching *dikṣās*) in the domestic manual of the Mānavas.<sup>22</sup>

This ancient complex was apparently concerned with a “secret” or “mystery” that was not so much taught as enacted. I have already submitted that the “secret” or esoteric knowledge may have been concerned with the conundrum of the “head of the sacrifice”—whose head, and how it is to be obtained. In other words, the ancient complex and its “mystery” may have turned on the sacrificial contest. This would seem to be supported by the inclusion of the so-called *caturhotṛ* or four-*hotṛ* formulas (including the other numerical configurations of ten, five, six, or seven *hotṛs*), which, as we saw, also qualify for a special consecration. In their classical form they are no more than uneventful strings of identification of officiants and other elements of the ritual with gods and other cosmic entities. As such they are just strings of short formulas to be learned by rote, devoid of mystery, numinosity, or sacrality. We do find, however, also an apparently older, more original dialogue scenario. “When the ‘Ten Hotṛs’ held a sacrificial session (*sattra*), through whom as a leader (*grhapati*) did they attain success?” (the answer is Prajāpati); and so questions and answers continue for the four, five, six and seven *hotṛs*.<sup>23</sup> Here we move from the unequivocal identification back to the riddle of the *brahmodya*. In this way we can understand that the *caturhotṛs* can still be called “the highest, hidden *brahman* of the gods.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, the four *hotṛs* are concerned with the sacrificial contest and its uncertain outcome. After what we have learned about the *pravara* or “election” of the *hotṛ* this cannot surprise us. But for our present purpose the essential point is that the special nature of these rites and texts resided in the uncertainty of the contest. Or, in terms of these same texts, they are concerned with “the highest, hidden *brahman* of the gods” that had to be won in the sacrificial contest, which, it would seem, is the reason they require a special initiation.

From our disquisition on the *brahmacārin* arises a double picture. On the one hand there is the period in the teacher’s or foster father’s household during the sun’s southern course (*dakṣiṇāyana*); on the other hand the setting out into the wilderness during the season of transhumance, conflict, and self-assertion after the winter solstice—or after the autumn harvest—until the return before the onset of the rains.<sup>25</sup> The mobile second period is the same as the one covered by the soma ritual.<sup>26</sup>



Viewed in this light the *dīkṣita* does not correspond so much with the *brahmacārin* as a famulus of the *ācārya* but rather with the *śrotriya* or the *snātaka*. In the classical scheme the latter is known as the one who has absolved his memorizing studies and after a concluding bath leaves the teacher's household to take up his station in life as a full-fledged member of society, that is, as a sacrificial patron. But the fundamental changes brought about by the ritualistic reform make it unlikely that the classical scheme is a direct continuation of the original situation. What links the *snātaka* with the *dīkṣita* is the consecratory bath as well as the proud code of conduct. In this connection it is significant that the *samāvartana* ceremony that turns the *brahmacārin* into a *snātaka* involves mounting and driving a chariot.<sup>27</sup> Similarly the *dīkṣita* is supposed to move with a chariot or, failing that, to take with him at least a part of a chariot as an emblem of his status.<sup>28</sup> The *brahmacārin* on the other hand is expressly forbidden to move with any kind of wheeled vehicle.<sup>29</sup> More generally, the rules to be observed by the *snātaka* are expressly declared to be the same as those for the *dīkṣita*.<sup>30</sup>

The *snātaka* and the *dīkṣita* have yet another feature in common. As the *snātaka*, though qualified, is not yet a married and settled householder but still on the move in search of such a status, so the *dīkṣita* goes out in quest of the *brahman* knowledge in order to assert his full brahmanic status. Or, in down-to-earth material terms, both are out to win the goods required for the desired station in life. As we saw in the case of the truthful Jābāla, the two aims are coextensive if not actually the same. If one would look for an analogue, the nearest approximation would be the knight errant in search of the Holy Grail and of material honor as well.

However, if the *dīkṣita* is closely related to the *snātaka*, he is no less similar to the *brahmacārin*. Like the latter he also shows us two faces—the lowly (though aggressive) foot-slogger who at best drags with him a piece of chariot as a reminder of his aspirations and the proud knight moving along on a fully equipped chariot who equals the *brahmacārin* turned *snātaka*. It may, moreover, be recalled that the *brahmacārin*, far from being only the lowly and servile pupil with which the sūtras have familiarized us, turns up as an awesome cosmic power in his own right in the Atharva-veda.<sup>31</sup> Both the *dīkṣita* and the *brahmacārin* or *snātaka*, then, are essentially ambivalent. Yet ambivalence alone does not explain the contradictory statements that make the *dīkṣita*—and in a comparable way the *brahmacārin* too—both a chariot-riding knight and an unassuming pedestrian.<sup>32</sup> Further on we shall come to the background of this contradiction.<sup>33</sup> But first we shall have to give some more attention to the *dīkṣita*'s ambivalence.

## 6.2

The comparison of the *dīkṣita* with the *brahmacārin* and the *snātaka* has shown us the ambivalence of their position. In general it is in keeping with

their transitional betwixt-and-between status. Ambivalence is here essential to the matter and can be viewed in the light of the “pivotement du sacré.” More precisely, it befits their common quest for the as-yet-unexpressed and elusive *brahman*. Their ambivalent status directly reflects the elusive unexpressedness of the *brahman* they seek to grasp and incorporate so as to become themselves its articulate expression. In that sense they may be considered *brāhmaṇa*, although they are still in search of the *brahman*. Herein, in their as yet unfinished search, lies their sacrality. Put in different terms, they are between life and death. We noticed already that the classical *brahman* officiant is essentially concerned with death. But while the *brahman* has come through death and, as the classical officiant, has learned how to handle it ritually, the *dīkṣita*—as well as the *brahmacārin* who equally still shows traces of a deathlike condition<sup>34</sup>—must still pass through that phase before he can be “[re-]born out of the *brahman* [power]” so as to become himself its full expression.

But how then is the problem of death enacted? The ritualistic myth of Prajāpati’s contest and victory over Death does not leave much room for such enactment.<sup>35</sup> We also saw that death under the guise of the immolation of the victim has been relegated outside the actual place of sacrifice. It stands to reason, therefore, that the notion of the *dīkṣita*’s passage through death only receives a passing and purely metaphorical mention.

Yet something more seems to be involved. In the more elaborate version of the *dīkṣā*, the royal consecration, the king is announced on the eve of the consecratory soma feast with the words: “This is your king, o Bhāratas,” then in a whisper, “Soma is our, the brahmins’ king.”<sup>36</sup> The second part of this formula is explained as a statement of the brahmins’ immunity vis-à-vis the king. However, it is not made clear why such a statement of obvious public importance should be whispered instead of being proclaimed loudly and clearly. The whisper suggests that there is an unspoken secret behind it.<sup>37</sup> The human king is not opposed to the divine “King Soma”; the two are on the contrary equated. The point of the secret—in fact, a “secret de Polichinelle”—is that Soma is killed, that is, pressed to deliver its juice for the cultic beverage. Indeed the texts do not tire stating that King Soma is killed, as is the animal victim. The unspoken secret, then, is that the king, like his divine counterpart King Soma, is vowed to death. “Death moves to his consecration (*rājasūya*),” as the Atharvaveda cryptically declares.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore that the Kāṭhaka recommends to celebrate the royal consecration with an animal sacrifice without the soma feast, because “the consecrated [king] is Soma; one kills Soma [by pressing the soma stalks]; killed he is not quickened.”<sup>39</sup> Although the somaless royal consecration is hardly convincing—there still is the animal victim that is regularly equated with the sacrificer—the Kāṭhaka’s identification of the consecrated with the soma that is to be “killed” forcefully makes the point of impending sacrificial death.

The awesome secret of the enigmatic announcement that juxtaposes the human king with the divine King Soma is resolved later on, when the king after his chariot drive and cattle raid—a telescoped version of his tour of conquest to win the goods of sacrifice—is enthroned. Seated on the throne he is, as we saw, proclaimed as the *brahman par excellence*: “Thou, o king, art *brahman*.”<sup>40</sup> The consecrated king is himself the hidden *brahman* force contained in the enigmatic announcement that cryptically equates him with King Soma who is to undergo death. Only after having triumphantly overcome death in his victorious tour of conquest he can be openly proclaimed as the *brahman par excellence*, just as the victorious contender in the riddle contest of the horse sacrifice can at the moment of “victory” say of himself: “this *brahmán* is the highest extension of speech.” The conundrum of death resolved, he stands forth as “the king of brahmins.”

But this does not yet tell us how the secret of death is given effect in sacrificial ritual. The *rājasūya* only gives the bare elements—cryptic announcement, telescoped tour of conquest, enthronement, and triumphant proclamation. The awesome secret of the king’s sacrificial death is ritualistically dissolved by disconnecting these elements. It is only the fixed succession of these elements that still reveals the original secret. The *dikṣā*, of the basic soma paradigm, the *agnistoma*, enables us further to fill out the picture. In the first place we see there how the identity with King Soma is effectuated. When the *dikṣita* has obtained, or rather won, the soma he presses its stalks on his right thigh with the mantra: “Enter into Indra’s right thigh, willing into the willing, soft into the soft.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, identifying himself with the warrior god Indra he takes the soma into himself. The soma stalks, packed in an ample piece of cloth and loaded on a cart, are then brought in a procession to the *śālā*. This, however, is not just a harmless solemnity but a conquering progress. “With Soma as [their] king they proceed conquering; when a human king comes to the house, it is in his power (*aiśvarya*) . . . , King Soma has come to his house, it is in his power.”<sup>42</sup> The *dikṣita*, then, representing Indra who—having taken Soma into himself, arrives as a conqueror at the *śālā*. We should, therefore, expect a confrontation at the *śālā*’s entrance and this is indeed what the ritual intimates.<sup>43</sup>

Now the monistic ritual does not allow for any such confrontation. It only recognizes the one single sacrificer. So the *dikṣita* must double as the master of the *śālā* to receive himself as King Soma at his arrival.<sup>44</sup> At this point we should recall that the *dikṣita* so far has only undergone the consecration “in the waters” (*apsu dikṣā*) and as such has managed to obtain the prime aquatic element, soma. The igneic element, on the other hand, is in the possession of the magnate in his *śālā* where the fires have expressly been fueled up already.<sup>45</sup> The confrontation is then put in terms of the two prime elements uniting against the single consecrated sacrificer. “Agni and Soma

join each other, together they aim at overpowering the sacrificer or his cattle.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore the *dikṣita*, doubling as his counterpart the sacrificer, stands at the entrance holding a he-goat—later to be sacrificed on the eve of the soma feast—as a welcoming offering “to buy himself free” (*niṣkrīṇīte*) from the wrath of Agni and Soma. Two points stand out here. In the first place the arrival of King Soma at the *śālā* is no less than a moment of critical danger for both *dikṣita* and sacrificer. And secondly the critical confrontation turns on who will win the safe possession of both Agni and Soma—the itinerant *dikṣita* who has incorporated the soma or the sedentary sacrificer in his *śālā*, who reminds us of the wealthy *vaiśya* “like an asura” from whom one may take one’s fire.<sup>47</sup> Of course, in the *śrauta* ritual the outcome is predetermined. The consecrated challenger and his counterpart, the magnate-sacrificer have been fused into one single person who then obtains both soma and fire.

However, the possession of both fire and soma has an unexpected consequence. It not only qualifies the consecrated to turn himself into a sacrificer, but also makes him equal to the *vṛtra* demon who equally holds Agni and Soma in himself. That is, we are told, why the sacrificer should not gasp for air. For when Vṛtra, pressed to the point of breathlessness, did so during his fight with Indra, Agni and Soma left him through his gaping mouth and went over the warrior god.<sup>48</sup> But this means that the *dikṣita* in the end, when he has won the goods for sacrifice, primarily Agni and Soma, and taken them into himself, must, like Vṛtra, face sacrificial death. The Śatapatha poignantly renders the reversal. At the end of the mythic fight, when Agni and Soma had left him and Vṛtra lay exhausted “like an empty skin bag,” he implored Indra: “Do not hurl [the *vajra* weapon] at me, thou art now what I [was before].”<sup>49</sup>

### 6.3

Against this background we can readily understand that self-sacrifice is an all-but-ubiquitous theme in the ritual *brāhmaṇa* texts, the victim as well as other offerings being regularly equated with the sacrificer.<sup>50</sup> But the question still is how the ritual effectuates the sacrificer’s death except by going to the ultimate consequence. The obvious answer is, of course, by the substitution of another victim for the sacrificer. However, it is not as simple as it may seem. This becomes immediately clear when we look, for instance, at the story of the brahmin boy Śunaḥśepa who was, after a long time and not without difficulty, obtained from his father as a substitute for King Hariścandra’s son, whom the god Varuṇa paradoxically demanded in sacrifice as a price for having given Hariścandra that very same son.<sup>51</sup> But before the substitution can be effected Varuṇa still has to agree to it, which he does on the laconic ground that “a brahmin is more than a kṣatriya.”<sup>52</sup>

Incidentally, there appears to be more to Śunaḥśepa's brahminhood than being simply "more than a kṣatriya." It is Śunaḥśepa's *brahman* skill in praising the gods that enables him to free himself when already bound as the sacrificial victim. Here we notice again the special concern of the *brahman* expert with overcoming death. It will not be fortuitous that the Śunaḥśepa story is a set piece of the *rājasūya* where it has its place after the enthronement and the *brahman* proclamation of the royal sacrificer.<sup>53</sup> In his preceding telescoped conquering circuit he has won the triumphant *brahman* power while conquering the goods for sacrifice.<sup>54</sup>

The problem of substitution is put in a different but not unrelated way for the normal soma sacrificer. The substitute as we have already noted in passing is the he-goat with which the consecrated sacrificer is said "to buy himself free." It is, however, not immediately sacrificed as one might expect but on the third day after the *dīkṣā* and the so-called *upasad* days. Although the *upasad* is an unassuming twice-daily *iṣṭi* of ghee on the days intervening between the arrival at the *śālā* and the settling on the *mahāvedi* on the eve of the soma feast, these offerings are thought of as the gods' conquest of the strongholds of their enemies, the asuras—and so again a conquering progress.<sup>55</sup> It is only at the end when settling on the *mahāvedi* that the *dīkṣita* can "buy himself free" by sacrificing the *agnīṣomīya* he-goat.<sup>56</sup> But the problem with the he-goat substitute is that one should not eat of it. "He who eats of it, eats a man; that is why one should not eat of it."<sup>57</sup> But this means that the officiants would be forbidden to eat even the *iḍā* portions as the ritual incontrovertibly requires. In other words, the *agnīṣomīya* animal sacrifice would be as good as canceled. The rule forbidding the consumption of the meat of the *agnīṣomīya* he-goat is decidedly strange, and we notice that the ritualists try to circumvent it. Thus the Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa argues that all sacrificial offerings are a buying free of oneself and so one would be unable to eat from any of the sacrificial viands. So the conclusion is that there is no reason to refrain from eating the *agnīṣomīya* victim.<sup>58</sup> Even the older Black Yajurveda texts try to find a way out of the impasse.<sup>59</sup> But why then should there have been such a rule at all?

One may see here an early reaction against sacrificial anthropophagy. But should such reactions overshoot its aim by ruling out also the substitute? The answer is in the *dīkṣita*'s calling. As his mythic prototype, the warrior god Indra, must slay Vṛtra, so the *dīkṣita* is called on to win by violent means the goods of life, the soma, and the fire, from his asuric counterparts. And when successfully filling himself with the conquered goods he becomes, like Indra, what the slain Vṛtra was before. Partaking of the *dīkṣita*'s food can thus readily be seen as partaking in the sin of Indra's Vṛtra-slaying violence and ultimately as man-eating in the sense of ingurgitating what he has violently integrated in his person. And so we see that

it is generally forbidden to accept the *dikṣita*'s food because in that way one takes over his guilt.<sup>60</sup>

This is confirmed by what is said about the *sattra*. The participants in a *sattra* are all both *dikṣita* and officiant. For that reason there is nobody to receive the *dakṣiṇā* gifts. Or rather, as it is said, he who accepts a *dakṣiṇā* from the *sattrins* "eats a man," just as one is said to do when partaking of the *agnīṣomīya* victim.<sup>61</sup> The point is that at a *sattra* one's self (*ātman*) is the *dakṣiṇā*.<sup>62</sup> This comes close to the idea of self-sacrifice. Indeed, the same passage in which it is said that one's self is the *dakṣiṇā* describes the twelve-day *sattra* metaphorically as a self-sacrifice. "Those who perform a *sattra* go to heaven; through the [days that the] *dikṣā* [lasts] they kindle themselves; they cook themselves through the *upasad* [days]; with [the first] two days [of the actual sacrifice] they cut off their hair, with [the next] two [days] their skin, with two their blood, with two their flesh, with two their bones, with two their marrow; the *sattra* has the self for *dakṣiṇā*, having led up the *dakṣiṇā* they go to heaven." It is tempting to connect this statement with the testimonies about religiously motivated self-sacrifice such as those about self-burning by Buddhist monks or the well-known self-imposed death of Jain renouncers.<sup>63</sup> In the same vein we also find a mobile sacrifice (*yātsattra*) that ends with the sacrificer taking the final bath in the river Yamunā. "There he disappears from among men," suggesting ritual suicide by drowning.<sup>64</sup>

Could we in that sense perhaps understand that the *sattra* is said to serve other aims, fulfill other wishes, than a normal sacrifice (*yajña*)?<sup>65</sup> Ritual suicide would in a drastically direct way express the desire for heaven. But this would hardly make the *sattra* different from normal sacrifice, which equally promises heaven and is generally imbued with the notion of self-sacrifice, albeit indirectly expressed.<sup>66</sup> It seems unlikely that the collective *sattra* and the individual soma sacrifice are originally at opposite ends from each other. They appear to derive from the same roots and to share the same orientation. Apart from the fact that "heaven" is also regularly promised to the individual sacrificer, the clearest instance of identical orientation is in the notion of self-sacrifice. As we saw, eating the food of the *dikṣita* is deprecated as "man-eating" in the same words as accepting the gifts of the *sattrin*. The *dikṣita* and the *sattrin* appear to have been originally the same. Thus we also have seen that the *yātsattra* I referred to speaks of an individual sacrificer. The original divide was another one, namely that of the asura-like magnate performing sacrifice in his *śālā* as against the deva-like mobile *dikṣita* challenging him in hopes of winning the goods that will enable him to set himself up as a munificent magnate and sacrificer.

However, the *dikṣita*, like the *sattrin*, may fail. The contest in which he must seek to attain his ultimate aim may turn against him. If that happens

he has indeed only himself left to stake in the game of sacrifice and this is particularly noticeable in the case of the *sattrins*. Harry Falk has rightly drawn attention to their characteristic poverty.<sup>67</sup> They are “pressed by hunger,” but “mounting the wheel of the gods” they hope to make it from rags to riches,<sup>68</sup> so that after the *sattra* a sacrifice with a thousand *dakṣiṇā* (cows) can be performed.<sup>69</sup> Here, it would seem, we can discern the different aim of the *sattra*. It aims at collecting the goods for the ensuing actual sacrifice, remolded as a soma sacrifice in its own right. But in different terms, it corresponds to the *dikṣā* phase of the classical soma paradigm. But what about the *dikṣita* who fails to win the goods for sacrifice or loses them? As the Taittirīya Saṃhitā rather crudely puts it, “During the year in which the *sattra* is successful (*saṃrddha*) the people are hungry, for they—the *sattrins*—take away their food and sustenance; during the year in which the *sattra* is defective (*vyrddha*), fails, the people are not hungry, for they do not take away their food and sustenance.”<sup>70</sup> The hungry ones will then be the failed *sattrin* raiders. In that case there may be no way left to the consecrated but actual self-sacrifice. It is then, when the *dikṣita* has to give himself up to sacrifice, that anthropophagy cannot be ruled out. But this also tells us that self-sacrifice is not the ultimate aim but a last resort.

The ultimate aim is to fight one’s way through from contest to contest in which the goods of sacrifice must be won. For it is those goods by which one should “buy oneself free.” But what is it that binds him and from which he must emancipate himself? The answer will by now be clear. It is death. The *dikṣita*—and the same goes for the *sattrin*—is a consecrated warrior whose consecration has vowed him to death. The goods he acquires can only be won by confronting death in the sacrificial arena. But once they are won they are truly his, for they have been won at the risk of death. In that very real sense they are an integral part of his person. They are not just a substitute for himself; they are his self. In this way Indra became, as we saw, what Vṛtra was before. Likewise the *dikṣita* almost literally takes the fire—through the fire drill—and soma—by pressing the stalks on his right thigh—into himself. In this way we can also understand why eating the meat of the *agnīśomīya* he-goat is tantamount to “eating a man” and thereby taking over his guilt.

We see, then, that substitution does not fundamentally change the problem of sacrificial death for the sacrificer’s guests and competitors. It only enables sacrificer and guests to make the goods of life that are tainted by death circulate between them without one or the other having to step out of the game by resorting to the ultimate consequence. So the remaining question is how the ritualists worked their way out of the conundrum of the unavoidable and even obligatory circulation of guilt and death. They managed the problem by having the sacrificer ritually dispossess himself of the sacrificial goods. The ritual means to that end are the “setting free”

(*vaisarjana*) libations when the fire and the soma stalks are brought from the *śālā* to the *mahāvedī* (*agnīśomapranayana*). Then, when the soma stalks have been deposited on the antelope skin spread for the purpose in the *havīrdhāna* shed, the sacrificer transfers soma again to the gods. "Before the sacrificer was the guardian of the soma; he says: 'This, o god Savitr is the soma of you [gods]'; impelled by Savitr he hands him [Soma] over to the gods; 'Thou, o Soma, hast gone [as] a god to the gods,' he says, for being a god he goes to the gods; 'Here I, a human, to the humans,' he says, for being a human he goes to the human beings, 'with offspring, with wealth,' he says; with offspring and cattle he turns to this world."<sup>71</sup> So the soma is explicitly separated from the sacrificer who as a *dīkṣita* kept it with himself. Similarly the fire that had been entwined with the *dīkṣita* through the exchange of their "bodies" is now disentangled and set apart from the sacrificer. "That body of mine that was in you that is now in me, that body of you that was in me that is now in you."<sup>72</sup> In this way, by making the *vaisarjana* precede the immolation of the *agnīśomīya* victim and thereby ritually separating the consecrated from the goods of sacrifice, the ritualists managed to neutralize the animal sacrifice. There is then no question anymore of the consecrated warrior giving himself up to sacrificial death, nor will his guests have to "eat a man." The specter of anthropophagy has successfully been put to rest.

At this point we are back again at the *avāntaradīkṣā* we discussed above, for the "setting free" (*vaisarjana*) terminates the *avāntaradīkṣā*.<sup>73</sup> It is the turning point when the consecrated warrior gives up his death vow and turns himself into a munificent sacrificer. Having overcome death he is now finally born a *brahman*.

## 6.4

The *sattra* can still further elucidate the way of the *dīkṣita* to his final triumph as the live manifestation of the *brahman*. But to that end we must first look into the position of the *dīkṣita* and the *sattrin*. The most striking difference is the single sacrificer of the normal soma ritual who is the only one to be consecrated and is assisted by nonconsecrated officiants as against the closely knit group of *sattrins* who are all *dīkṣita* and sacrificer as well as officiant. We should remember though that this refers to the classical *śrauta* ritual. On closer inspection the difference appears strangely blurred.<sup>74</sup> Formally the soma sacrifices are divided according to the number of their *sutyā* days in *ekāhas* (one *sutyā* day), *ahinas* (two to twelve days), and *sattras* (twelve days and more). The *ekāhas* and *ahinas* are normal, single-sacrificer soma rituals. The important divide is the twelve-day sacrifice (*dvādaśāha*), which can either be an *ahina* with a single *dīkṣita* and sacrificer or a *sattra* in which the functions of *dīkṣita*, sacrificer, and officiant are performed equally



by all participants. Now Apastamba's manual first states this clear and straightforward rule.<sup>75</sup> But when it discusses the various possible numbers of consecrated participants—there may even be an unlimited number of them—the seemingly clear-cut rule appears to be forgotten even to the point of being reversed. According to the rule an *ahina* should have no more or less than seventeen participants, that is, one sacrificer who has undertaken the consecration and sixteen nonconsecrated officiants. However, contrary to expectation we are told that if any number of participants is consecrated, from one to an unlimited number, it must be an *ahina*.<sup>76</sup> Only if the number of participants is exactly seventeen it can be either a *sattra* or an *ahina*. So, instead of the *ahina* following the normative paradigm of the soma ritual, it turns out, against the previously stated rule, to be an anomaly, while the *sattra* that would in principle be able to accommodate an unlimited number of *dikṣitas* is limited to seventeen such participants. Here another, older pattern breaks to the surface.<sup>77</sup>

This older pattern revealed by the contradictory ruling about the number of participants in *ahina* and *sattra* still knows the closely knit band of consecrated warrior sacrificers as different from the classical *sattrins* who are entirely closed in on themselves. When we look in this light again at the single *dikṣita* we notice that he is not as isolated as the texts would make us believe. Who, for instance, are the *sanihāras* sent out to collect the goods for sacrifice?<sup>78</sup> The texts that have broken down and utterly reduced this operation do not tell us, but it is clear that the *dikṣita* must have with him a fairly sizable band of retainers other than the officiants. When we further consider that the *aśvamedha* has a small army accompanying the sacrificial horse on its yearlong circuit—an army that has license to plunder those who are unable to answer certain esoteric questions about the impending sacrifice—there cannot be much doubt about the original nature of the *sanihāras'* action, however much it has been reduced and made into a harmless sideshow.<sup>79</sup> The picture this suggests fits in with the confrontation at the arrival of the *dikṣita* at the *śālā* and with the conquering march to the *mahāvedi* where the *vaisarjana* takes place. In this connection it is interesting that this latter rite—apart from the use the ritualists made of it to neutralize the *agnīṣomīya* animal sacrifice—is interpreted by the Kāthaka as a dissolution of a war band after the battle has been won.<sup>80</sup>

At this point a brief look at the ancient *vrātyas* imposes itself. As is now generally recognized, both the *dikṣita* and the *sattrin* derive from the *vrātya*, the aggressive warrior moving about in sworn bands.<sup>81</sup> Although remolded and integrated in the *śrauta* ritual by way of a special group of *ahina* soma sacrifices, the *vrātyastomas*, their original itinerant warrior nature, which in the perspective of the classical *śrauta* system can only be viewed as “unorthodox” at best, is still clearly noticeable. Incidentally, it is interesting that the *vrātya* has a special relationship with the violently dangerous divine

archer Rudra who kills or makes away with the magnate's cattle if not propitiated (or rather forestalled by giving it to him).<sup>82</sup> The Rudra aspect we noticed of the classical sacrificer and his counterpart, the *brahman* officiant, may well be a continuation, albeit vestigial, of the *vrātya*'s relationship to his god. As such it would seem to link the sacrificer to the ancient *vrātya* and, generally, underline the *vrātya* background to the classical ritual, especially the soma sacrifice. The ancient *vrātya* background may explain the anomaly we noticed regarding the number of *ahina* sacrificers, while the *sattra* is strictly limited to the seventeen precisely defined functions of the classical soma sacrifice. The *ahina*, then, still reflects the "preclassical" pattern of the consecrated warrior band that the classical *śrauta* system broke into two mutually exclusive schemes, either the single *dikṣita* and sacrificer or the regularized group of seventeen *sattrins*. The *vrātya* stands parent to both schemes.<sup>83</sup>

The remolding of the *vrātya* band into the group of *śrauta sattrins* is readily understandable. The single if not entirely solitary *dikṣita*, however, presents more difficulties. Thus the *dikṣita*—like the *snātaka*—as we have seen proudly moves with a chariot, while the hunger-pressed *sattrins* appear to be devoid of such prestigious paraphernalia. On the other hand the *dikṣita*'s emblematic stick, the *daṇḍa* or staff, even though it is later also known as the emblem of royal justice, rather suggests the itinerant pedestrian as well as the similarly equipped *brahmacārin*. Although it may not be possible to solve all difficulties the *sattra* and its *vrātya* background may give us some clues. In the first place there is the word *sattra* itself, meaning a "session," a sitting. This seems hardly to suit the itinerant warrior band. Nor does it fit in with the mobility that we have come to recognize as a characteristic of the soma ritual, at least in its origins. But we also meet with the word *ayana*, the going or course, in the names of *sattras* of a year's or longer duration, such as the *gavām ayana*, "the course of the cows."<sup>84</sup> The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa tries to explain this curious contrast. "The *dikṣā* is a sitting down (*niṣat*), that is the *sattra*; therefore they say of them: 'they sit'; when thereafter they perform the sacrifice, they go, [and] he who is the leader leads; therefore they say of them: 'they go.' The *dikṣā*, then, is a sitting down, that is the *sattra*, that is the going (*ayana*), that is 'the course of the session' (*sattrāyana*); when afterwards, having gone to the end of the sacrifice they arise, that is the arising (*utthāna*); therefore they say of them: 'they arose'; this, then, is the 'preceding talk' (*purastādvadana*?).<sup>85</sup> The Śatapatha, deftly entwining the sitting down and the going, clearly tries to explain too much. It is important, however, that the *sattra* is equated with the *dikṣā*, while the ensuing sacrifice is the *ayana*, the going.

The sitting down or settling together of the *sattrins* is further explained by Baudhāyana's manual. "Those who are going to undertake the *dikṣā* for the yearlong sacrifice settle down together; thus the ancient ones (*pūrve*)

having settled down together used to sit while interrogating each other about their learning (*anūkta*) and their human skills (*mānuṣa*).<sup>86</sup> Perhaps this preliminary testing of each other still survives in the *purastādvadana*, “the preceding talk” the Śatapatha mentions in concluding its explanation of the term *sattra*. The purpose of the mutual quizzing appears to be the formation of a closely knit band of *dīkṣitas*. But the outcome is that one of the participants is somehow set apart or given a special position. Thus Baudhāyana continues by stating: “but there is one who is a *śamarathasya kartr*, ‘one who puts the chariot to rest.’” This term is ambivalent. It may mean either a chariot that has “come to rest” through an accident, for instance, during a chariot race, or one that has been laid up by dismantling it, specifically by taking off its most important and vulnerable part, the two wheels.<sup>87</sup> In the present case in which the participants have temporarily settled down the latter meaning seems to recommend itself. Interestingly, the *snātaka* who receives a honorific feast when settling down is equally said to be going “to put the chariot to rest” (*śamarathasya karṣyan*).<sup>88</sup> As argued above the *snātaka* is akin to the *dīkṣita*. At any rate one among the *sattrins* undertaking the *dīkṣā* is singled out for a special purpose.

Other texts also single out a particular participant who is given the consecration later on, during the *upasad* days.<sup>89</sup> The Kāthaka explains the later consecrated one in terms of the thirteenth month of the otherwise twelve-month year. “The half months wanted to become the months; they undertook the twelve-day sacrifice (*dvādaśāha*) after having made the thirteenth month a *brāhmaṇa*; when it [the thirteenth month] was seen, they broke up.”<sup>90</sup> And again, now as a sacrificial contest between the months and the seasons, “the seasons were [dominant], the months were the younger ones (*anujāvara*); the months wanted to reach [the position of] the seasons; they undertook the *dvādaśāha*; having made the thirteenth [month] a *brāhmaṇa* they scared away (*nibhāyya*) the seasons during the cool season (*śiśireṇa*) and broke up towards spring, towards vitality (*vasantam ūrjam abhyudatiṣṭhan*).”<sup>91</sup> Therefore, we are told, one should undertake the consecration in the cool season in order to best one’s enemy. In short, “in the cool season is the start (*prayāṇa*, [the going forth]), in spring one successfully sets up a laager (*avasānam rddhoti*).”<sup>92</sup>

## 6.5

The picture that is suggested by the Kāthaka as well as by parallel passages fits in well with the seasonal pattern we already noticed—setting out in the cool season on a raiding expedition during the *uttarāyana*, the northern course of the sun.<sup>93</sup> Of particular interest, however, is the way the group used to be formed. Baudhāyana evokes a mutual testing which looks like a verbal contest.<sup>94</sup> But the peculiar feature is the one singled out who is put

on a par with the “thirteenth month” and who is consecrated afterward to be made a *brāhmaṇa*. Now the thirteenth month is the transition period of one year to the next. Concluding the passed year, it is the image of the whole year as well as the embryonic form of the new year. This is a perfect image for the *dikṣita*, who is equally viewed as an embryo to be born as the *brahman*. And like the thirteenth month he is still in a betwixt-and-between situation, “without a fixed abode” (*anāyatana*).<sup>95</sup> It would seem then that the extra *dikṣita* consecrated later—possibly at the time of the solstice period of the thirteenth month—is, in fact, the *dikṣita par excellence* among the *sattrins*.

A passage of the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa gives us more particulars.<sup>96</sup> “Formerly they went about inquiring [with the intention] ‘we shall undertake the *dikṣā*’; then, having settled together [and] loudly proclaiming their mutual election (*varaṇa*), they sit asking in turn the secret (*nibhrīyam anupracchantah*); as many as came together used to undertake the consecration; that is the consistent wish, that is the *sattra*, that they get up (*uttiṣṭhanti*) having made one a *brāhmaṇa* with whom as a non-*brāhmaṇa* they undertake the *dikṣā*; therefore one should undertake the *dikṣā* with a non-*brāhmaṇa*.” This tallies well with Baudhāyana’s short description of the ancient *sattrins*’ usage. The “one who puts the chariot to rest” is then the non-*brahmaṇa* who is to be made into a *brāhmaṇa*. Now the Jaiminīya continues by telling us that this nonbrahmin is a *rājanyabandhu*, a man of a royal lineage, who discards his princely paraphernalia—*śāmūlājina* (an unknown garment), jewel (*maṇi*), and gold ornament (*hiraṇya*) and offers it to a learned brahmin (*śrotriya*), saying “I shall undertake the *dikṣā* for the year [-long sattra], reverend Sir, instruct me.”<sup>97</sup>

This princely *dikṣita* unavoidably brings the *rājasūya* sacrificer to mind. In connection with his consecration—a more elaborate form of the *dikṣā*—he is proclaimed king and secretly equated with Soma, the king of the brahmins. Interestingly this proclamation takes place on the last of the *upasad* days. Although there is formally speaking no question of others undertaking the *dikṣā* before him—the *rājasūya* belongs to the *ekāha* category in which there is only one *dikṣita* and sacrificer—it may not be too bold to make the connection with the *rājanyabandhu* who is consecrated afterward on the *upasad* days. The likelihood of the connection increases when we further consider that he is indeed made a *brāhmaṇa* in the end after having triumphantly overcome his enemies in a telescoped cattle raid when his chariot is indeed put to rest again on its mobile stand.

Established on the throne as the *brahman par excellence* he has made, like the *dvādaśāha* sacrificer, a successful *avasāna*, an unyoking of the draft animals. The unyoking of the animals from the chariot is seen as a freeing of the royal sacrificer to enjoy prosperity (*śrī*), houselordship (*gārhapatā*), and kingdom (*rājya*).<sup>98</sup> Or, as it is said in a comparable context—the *vā-*

*japeya* and its concluding sequel the *brhaspatisava*—"whom they put at their head should henceforth [i.e., after the *brhaspatisava*] lead a peaceful life amongst them."<sup>99</sup> Of course, given the overall cyclical pattern, the newly settled ruler will be challenged in his turn. The "arising" (*utthāna*) at the end of the *sattra* will bring a renewed setting out in its wake in the same way as there is a breaking up (*udavasāna*) after the standard soma ritual. Equally the royal sacrificer will have to go out again on a conquering circuit ritualistically reduced to the *samsṛp* offerings.<sup>100</sup> But the wish for stability and settled conditions that allow the chariot to be put to rest is even the more urgent for it. This can make us understand the *sattrins*' need to consecrate a nonbrahmin nobleman or *rājanyabandhu* as their leader to see them through to an eventual settled and prosperous life.

The position of the nonbrahmin *dikṣita* consecrated afterward on the *upasad* days is a most honorable one, but at the same time it is an utterly risky one because he will have to shoulder the burden of failure, the *vyṛddhi* of the sacrifice.<sup>101</sup> He may have to pay for it with his life as the royal *dikṣita* may have to share the fate of the immolated King Soma. Such, it would seem, almost happened to the non-*brāhmaṇa* Kavaṣa Ailuṣa, who was chased by his co-*sattrins* into the wilderness to die there of thirst. In his dire straits, however, he "saw" the "child of the waters" (*aponaptrīya*) hymn—*en clair*, he must miraculously have found water—and consequently was called back to lead the *sattrins* to success.<sup>102</sup> Incidentally we see here again the wilderness as the place of the revelation that marks out the non-*brāhmaṇa* *dikṣita* among the *sattrins* to become the *brahman par excellence*, the "king of us, brahmins."

In this perspective the single *dikṣita* of the normal *agnistoma*-type soma ritual would seem to derive directly from the nobleman consecrated afterward at the *sattra* and destined, like the consecrated king, to become the *brahman* and "to put the chariot to rest" as the *snātaka* does when settling down. At the start he either goes in search of co-*dikṣitas* (*sahadikṣin*) to become their leader or *grhapati*, or he has already assembled a group of retainers whom we can still recognize in the *sanīhāras*.<sup>103</sup> His position is very much like that of the leader, the *sthapati*, of the ancient *vrātya* warriors, each of whom brings thirty-three cows to their leader.<sup>104</sup> Here it should also be noted that the *sthapati* alone keeps the observances (*vrata*) for the other *vrātyas*.<sup>105</sup> In this respect the single *dikṣita* of the classical soma ritual resembles the ancient *sthapati*, for the *dikṣita* too is the only one to keep the *vratas* in contradistinction to his *sanīhāra* retainers or his brahmin officiants.

In this way we may also understand the double picture of the classical soma *dikṣita* who, as we saw, is both a proud warrior moving with chariot and retinue and an unimpressive foot-slogger provided only with a staff (*daṇḍa*) and still in search of a band of cowarriors whose leader he may

eventually become.<sup>106</sup> Put differently, the *dikṣita* seems to be a conflation of the lordly chariot warrior with his retinue and the common *vrātya* or *sattrin* looking for acceptance and patronage.

There appears to be still a third possibility that may well have been the most important one. At any rate it is the one that has been singled out and emphasized in the classical *śrauta* ritual. This is the case in which the single *dikṣita* is himself a lordly magnate who, engrossed in his vows and observances, remains himself immobile in his *śālā* but sends out his war and raiding bands of warriors.<sup>107</sup> In fact it is the pattern preferred by the *śrauta* ritualists who require the soma *dikṣita* to stay in his *śālā* while sending out the *sanihāras*. This is emphatically the case of the high-ranking horse sacrificer. While the *rājasūya* sacrificer is fully mobile, the *āsvamedha* requires the sacrificer to withdraw from all mobile activity to the extent of having him hand over his reign to the brahmin *adhvaryu*, whose name means “the one going along the roads,” even though he equally remains in the center while the army goes out to follow the freely roaming horse. The *āsvamedha* sacrificer, then, is the true *gr̥hapati*, the lord of the house, and ideal patron of the warrior band.<sup>108</sup> This seems also to be the case with the *vrātyas* who used to unite under the leadership (*gārhapata*) of the most learned one or of one distinguished by noble birth or, failing that, of one distinguished by acquired wealth.<sup>109</sup> But possibly this need not be one of their number, for before setting out on their *vrātyā* campaign they are to seek acceptance (*pratigrahaṃ icchante*) with a king or a *brāhmaṇa* for a month or a season.<sup>110</sup> In terms of the apprenticeship or fosterage of the *brahmacārin*, they look for the patronage of a powerful foster father. In this respect it seems significant that the *vrātyas* are regularly qualified as “sons.” Thus they are called *rājaputras*, “king’s sons,” that is, young knights errant in search of a patron.<sup>111</sup>

Schematically we may discern here a progress from the *rājanyabandhu* in search of a band of co-*sattrins* or *vrātyas* who may accept him as their leader, to the proud chariot warrior who will lead his sworn retainers to wealth and security like the *rājasūya* sacrificer who may finally proceed to the status of the settled magnate staying in his *śālā* while sending out his band of consecrated warriors. But the pivotal figure is the one classically known as the soma *dikṣita* who is the direct descendent of the consecrated war leader who aspires to turn out as the *brahman par excellence*, having led his followers to prosperity and security while becoming himself a munificent patron and sacrificer.

When he has reached that exalted stage he is not only a patron and sacrificer; he is also the ideal teacher. Having come through it all and asserted his *brahman* knowledge he holds the secret of sacrifice. That is why we are told that the *śrotriya*s of the Kuru-Pañcālas went to the king of the Kurus to learn the secret “knowledge of the victims’ heads” (*paśuśiṣṭavidyā*)

that must be buried under the fire altar.<sup>112</sup> And the way for them to learn it is that they have the king engage them as officiants at the *agnicayana* celebration.<sup>113</sup> Here the sacrificer clearly is the teacher of the secret. This may also explain the many instances in the upaniṣads of kings imparting esoteric knowledge to brahmins and giving them *dakṣiṇās* too as is normally done by the sacrificer.<sup>114</sup> Ultimate sacrality, then, rests with the king or chieftain who is at the same time patron, sacrificer, and teacher, in short the original sacral king and “priest.” In fact, he rather than the brahmin is the real priest. But even so he must be ready to be challenged at the next turn of the cycle and face the risk of being dislodged again.

## 6.6

It may seem strange that the institution of sacrifice did not lead to a clearly defined and highly profiled priesthood. Yet this is what our investigation of the ancient Vedic sacrifice indicates. And even though the ritualistic reform and its vast corpus of priestly lore would seem to require such a priesthood it failed in the end to do so. But perhaps the lack of an established priesthood should not surprise us. The all-but-priestless situation is reminiscent of ancient Greece. “Greek religion,” as Walter Burkert observes, “might almost be called a religion without priests,” priesthood not being a way of life but a part-time honorary office.<sup>115</sup> This should probably be understood against the background of the *polis* and the comprehensive ideal of the all-around citizen that preempted the field of activity and left little room for a separate priestly estate. But also in the ancient Iranian world priesthood does not seem to have been a self-evident institution. We have already seen that notwithstanding the presence of a *magos* sacrifice among the Persians of Herodotus’s time was very much a layman’s affair and that it is so even today among the Iranian Zoroastrians.<sup>116</sup>

For a full-blown institutional priesthood to arise something more and different seems necessary. In the ancient Near East, it would seem, it was the temple as a well-endowed institution that called forth the priesthood. The temple again depended on the ruler’s patronage if it was not a royal institution from the beginning. Also in ancient Iran the development of the fire temple under imperial patronage must have been a powerful factor in the development of the priestly estate. It seems significant that Cyrus the Great is credited with having organized the *magoi*.<sup>117</sup> And one may doubt whether Christianity would have known a well-organized, priestly estate without the activity of Constantine the Great. Also in the Indian world it was the ruler’s intervention, to begin with the Maurya ruler Aśoka, that turned the Buddhist *sangha*—though not intended as a priestly institution—into a hierarchically organized priesthood. Also in the Hindu world the temple under royal patronage, not the Vedic corpus of priestly lore, was

the main prop of the priestly establishment. And also the survival of the Veda has to a great extent depended on royal favor and endowment.<sup>118</sup>

The sacrificial arena, however, as I argued above, does not require priestly expertise so much as skill and dexterity in the contest. It calls, in other words, for the consecrated warrior who challenges the sacrificer for *brahman*-hood and the goods of life. Being vowed to death the consecrated warrior is the sacrificer's necessary counterpart in the life-and-death contest of sacrifice. But however necessary he is to the sacrificial contest he is an outsider who must force his way in—at the risk of his life—by astuteness and the threat of violence. Here is how the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa describes such an occasion.<sup>119</sup> King Viśvantara Sauśadmana performs a sacrifice from which the Śyāparṇas are excluded. The latter nevertheless sit down in the sacrificial enclosure. The king then gives orders to remove these “perpetrators of evil deeds, speakers of impure language.” Incidentally, evil deeds and impure, vituperative language are typical of the ancient *vrātyas*.<sup>120</sup> The Śyāparṇas, however, boasting of their prowess in winning the soma drink, appoint one among them as their champion who, claiming to be one “who knows thus” (*itthamvid*), challenges the king. The latter retorts by asking contemptuously: “What is it that you know, you *brahmabandhu*?” The ensuing verbal contest takes the form of a ritualistic debate on the sacrificial food proper to each of the varṇas, but the point seems to be that the Śyāparṇas as brahmins are entitled to the soma drink, whereas the king who withholds it from them should himself be excluded since he is a kṣatriya. Finally the matter is concluded by the king giving the Śyāparṇa contestant a thousand cows and accepting his party at his sacrifice. Here the contest ends in a compromise, the king holding his own by his munificent *dakṣiṇā* gift while the Śyāparṇas accept his patronage. In a comparable way we hear of the devas being taken under the patronage by the asuras instead of forthwith toppling them as may also happen.<sup>121</sup> This may also explain why it is recommended by some authorities that one should choose young men—not experienced brahmins as one would expect—as his sacrificial officiants.<sup>122</sup> It does not seem too farfetched to see in these young men the consecrated warriors in search of patronage before they can manage to vindicate themselves as sacrificers in their own right.

The position of the outside challenger forcing his way in is, however, different from that of the *hotṛs*, each seated at his own *dhīṣṇya* fire. They compete with each other on an equal footing on who will be the effective sacrificer. The *hotṛ* as such is, moreover, not consecrated. The consecrated warrior on the other hand still has to fight his way through to acceptance before he can hope eventually to vindicate himself as *brahman* and sacrificer. For the time being, however, he is at best only a *brahmabandhu* preparing himself for ultimate *brahman*-hood and wealth to spend in sacrifice. The *śrauta* ritual of the soma feast only reflects this last phase, the last successful



run to ultimate vindication that, having canceled the contest, this ritual can only give as a foregone conclusion already achieved at the very beginning.

Yet the reformed *śrauta* ritual still preserves the traces of the original difference between the outside challenger and the other participants, the competing *hotṛs*. This can be seen in the striking contrast between the *brahman* and the other officiants. The former does not take part in the *pravara* contest. He is there already from the beginning, a double of the sacrificer, to carry, as the mender or *bhīṣaj* of the sacrifice, the burden of sacrificial failure and death. As such he is “the other track” of sacrifice.<sup>123</sup>

The *brahman* officiant of the classical *śrauta* ritual derives both from the consecrated challenger who may be called on to shoulder sacrificial death and from the ultimately successful embodiment of the *brahman* power. This tells us that the common *brāhmaṇa* did not originate in the priesthood. His direct ancestor was the consecrated warrior vowed to death but hoping eventually to win through to his ultimate vindication. Briefly and crudely, before there were priests there were warriors. But the brahmin, when he gave up being a warrior, never fully became a priest.

In this connection it is interesting that also in Zoroastrianism, which did develop a full-blown priesthood, the priest still shows his warrior origins. When the fire is brought to be “enthroned” in its domed sanctuary, it is explicitly borne there in triumph like a victorious king, reminding us of the equally warlike carrying forward of the fire in the *śrauta* ritual. The priests preceding the fire hold drawn swords and ox-headed maces. While the drawn sword speaks for itself the mace is equally viewed as a symbol of the priest’s being a warrior for the faith. Generally, there is no doubt about the notion of the priest’s warriorhood in the ever-ongoing fight against the Evil Spirit.<sup>124</sup>

On the face of it the brahmin too might have become a true priest. Where sacrifice failed to give rise to priesthood, ritualism that broke the spell of sacrifice might have done so, and to some extent it did. When it canceled the sacrificial contest, the cyclical alternation and interchange of life and death were stopped dead. The participants were statically fixed in their positions—the king and sacrificer on one side, the brahmin on the other, as are the *yajamāna* and the *brahman* officiant in the classical ritual. This set the scene for brahminic priesthood, the brahmin being fixed in his expert concern with the ritualistic *śruti*. What was lacking, though, was the social dimension. For the uncontestable order of the *śruti* was achieved by fusing the sacrificer with his opponent, as Prajāpati definitively conquered his rival, Death, by taking him into himself. The resulting monistic individualization took the *śrauta* order out of society and turned it into transcendent truth. At the same time Prajāpati’s monism could only lead to the internalization of the ritual that left no room for a priesthood. Instead it produced the extrasocial figure of the renouncer who has established his

sacrificial fire not in a fire temple but in himself, independent of the surrounding world. A definitive split came about between the insecure worldly sacrality of the life-and-death contest on the one hand and the absolute order of transcendence on the other.

Having lost its focus and ultimate validity in sacrifice the sacrality of the contest was dispersed throughout society under the king as its main but not its only agent. And so was priesthood, which consequently could not develop into a clearly defined uniform estate. The king continued in the role of the ancient sacrificer but his sacrality was now overshadowed and, in fact, invalidated by the transcendence of the *śruti*. Under its leveling law even the royal *āsvamedha* sacrificer is just a *yajamāna* like any other.

The brahmin on the other hand, called to the transcendence of the absolute order of the *śruti* but forced to live in a social world of conflict and exchange, was left hovering between worldly sacrality and unlivable transcendence. Essentially he remained the betwixt-and-between figure he was before, but now he lacked the prospect of eventually vindicating himself except by the radical step of renouncing the world.

## *The Sacrificial Meal*

### 7.1

IT IS TIME WE RETURN TO Vedic sacrifice, to what it was and what it became. The all-but-exclusive emphasis on fire and burnt oblation had broken the concretely material and societal pattern of sacrifice. The burnt oblation can only point to the immaterial unseen, the *adr̥ṣṭa* that the later theoreticians proclaim as the be-all and end-all of sacrifice. The material remains of the oblation, the ashes left by the fire, are ritually of no account and remain unused. Nor does the smoke come in for ritual use. Even the brightly burning flame is superseded by its abstract and generalized quality of *tejas*, glow, energy.<sup>1</sup> Little room was left for the direct and tangible manipulation of life and death epitomized in the two other moments of sacrifice, the immolatory kill and its material purpose, the sacrificial meal, the sustenance of life. Sacrifice was dematerialized as it was desocialized.

Yet, although the sacrificial meal and the distribution of food has been mostly relegated to the domestic ritual, the *śrauta* corpus still preserves ample evidence of their erstwhile central importance in sacrifice. Thus, when discussing the *odana*, the rice mess with or without meat, we saw that it had been the core of the sacrificial fire cult, even without a burnt oblation being made of it.<sup>2</sup> And even though the commentator Sāyaṇa sternly declares that the purpose of the *odana* at the beginning of the ritual for setting up the *śrauta* fire is *not* the meal offered to four brahmins but the three sticks stirred in the remainder and put on the fire so as to produce somehow the new *śrauta* fire,<sup>3</sup> a Kāṭhaka text flatly states the exact opposite. “The root of the *brahman* power,” we are told, “is the Veda; of the Vedas the root is what the [brahmin] officiants eat; that is what the *brahmaudana* is about.”<sup>4</sup> Crude as it may seem, a statement like this is perfectly in line with the *anvāhārya* food—another *odana*, offered to the four brahmins officiating at a standard *īṣṭi*—being addressed with the words: “O Brahman, thou art Brahman, to Brahman thee,” as we saw when discussing the *brahman*’s office.<sup>5</sup> Similarly we saw that the core of his function was the eating of the sacrificial food as the guest *par excellence* who thereby takes over the burden

of death. This comes out clearest in the *brahman*'s specialized charge of eating the *prāśitra* or "fore portion." But in this respect—"desacralizing" the food by taking the sting of death out of it—the *prāśitra* is not essentially different from the *anvāhārya* food. For this rice mess is, like the *prāśitra*, also concerned with the "wound" of sacrifice. As the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, explaining the word *anvāhārya*, says, "he puts it on the rent (*chidra*) of sacrifice, what of the sacrifice is cruel (*krūra*), what is torn apart (*vilīṣṭa*) that he provides for (*anvāharati*) with the *anvāhārya*; that is why it has its name."<sup>6</sup>

Even though the *anvāhārya* mess is not eaten on the place of sacrifice in the course of the ritual as the *brahmaudana* is, it does make clear the importance attached to the meal. But here again, as the fire was superseded by the concept of *tejas*, so the meal was replaced by the abstract notion of "food" (*anna*) as a cosmic force. Thus a mantra declares that "food they call breathing-in (*prāṇa*), food breathing-out (*apāna*), death [they call] food as well as life; food the brahmin [sages] name old age (*jaras*); food the procreation of offspring."<sup>7</sup> This mantra, the offering verse for a burnt oblation of meat at a wish-fulfilling cow sacrifice, outlines in the laconic form of identifications typical of the ritualistic brāhmaṇa texts the life-and-death predicament of man's mortality centered in the abstract value of food. But there is no mention of an actual celebration in a communal meal. "Food" has been interiorized as a vital force sustaining the life, procreation, and death of the individual. Its only outward sign is the burnt oblation that is accompanied by our food mantra.

## 7.2

But, apart from telling vestiges and references, does the *śrauta* ritual still contain instances of a communal meal as part of the sacrificial complex? In the third chapter we discussed at length the *brahmaudana*, but this is not a *śrauta* rite. Its sacrificer is not yet a *yajamāna* in the *śrauta* sense. As a regular part of the "solemn" ritual there is, of course, the eating of the *idā* portions to which we have already referred a number of times. We shall have to come back to this sternly sober solemnity. But first attention should be given to a genuine example of a lavish festive meal embedded in the *śrauta* ritual.

It occurs in the course of the third four-monthly (*cāturmāsya*) seasonal festivity, the *sākamedha*, in autumn, on the two days of full moon in the month Kārttika or Mārgaśīrṣa. On the first or *upavasatha* day and early next morning at sunrise a series of three interconnected *īṣṭis* is performed celebrating the Maruts as warriors assisting Indra in his fight with the dragon Vṛtra. The first *īṣṭi*, at noon on the *upavasatha* day, is addressed to the *sām-tapana* or "Scorching" Maruts; in the evening follows the *caru* or rice mess

for the *grhamedhin* Maruts, the Maruts worshipped in domestic sacrifice (*grhamedha*); and finally, early next morning, the *kriḍin* or “Dancing” Maruts are honored.<sup>8</sup>

It is, of course, not fortuitous that this feast should be characterized as a *grhamedha*. As we have seen, feasting on food is done more properly in the domestic sphere than in the rigid *śrauta* ritual. The sacrifice for the *grhamedhin* Maruts is, therefore, put on a par with a domestic *pākayajña*.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, however, the proceedings are presented as a regular *īṣṭi* in the *śrauta* mold into which *grhya* characteristics have been inserted by way of modifications or as alternatives.<sup>10</sup> The sacrifice for the *grhamedhin* Maruts, in other words, points up the contrast between the domestic *pākayajña* and its *śrauta* counterpart, the standard *īṣṭi*. Or rather it leads us back to the situation anterior to the artificial gap between the *grhya* and the “solemn” *śrauta* ritual. For although the brāhmaṇa texts of the Black Yajurveda explicitly refer to the domestic *pākayajña* as the model of the *grhamedhin* sacrifice, it is not so much the standardized *pākayajña* as the more archaic ritual of the *odana*.<sup>11</sup> This comes out in the seemingly insignificant question of whether the ghee should be kept in the *dhruvā* or “static” ladle or in the *caru* or *odana* vessel.<sup>12</sup> The latter alternative we know already from the *brahmaudana* of the *agnyādheya*. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa even prescribes making a hollow for the ghee in the fairly solid rice mess of the *grhamedhin caru*.<sup>13</sup> Generally it would seem that the practice of keeping the ghee with the rice mess is typical of the *odana* ritual that does not yet know the ritualistic apparatus of the *śrauta* and is not dependent on the elaboration of the *grhya* ritual either. This, as we already concluded when discussing the *brahmaudana*, made it the natural link between the domestic and *śrauta* spheres in the *agnyādheya*.<sup>14</sup> In the case of the *caru* for the *grhamedhin* Maruts, however, the problem of closing the gap so astutely devised by the ritualists presented itself to them in a different way. Here the *odana* meal had to be fitted into the *īṣṭi* scheme. But how to reconcile the exuberance of the feast with the rigidity of the *śrauta* order, the ostensibly communal with the strictly individual?

So let us first have a look at the information the texts give us on the *grhamedha* meal. That it is meant to be a lavish and joyful feast is made perfectly clear. “Well-nourished, in high spirits and with cheerful faces they pass the night; the neighbours (*pratiśā*) also prepare [rice messes]; in addition they slaughter cows; they anoint eyes and body; they let the calves pass the night with the cows [so that the former may also be contented].”<sup>15</sup> It may seem odd to be ordered by the rule of ritual to be happy and cheerful, but this can only underline the exceptional nature of the occasion. The most striking feature, however, is the elaborate emphasis on the community. The *caru*—cooked in the milk of all the sacrificer’s cows and therefore an unusually large one—is divided in as many portions, called *odana*, as

there are members of the household (*amātya*), or even more “if the rice mess is particularly large.”<sup>16</sup> Apart from the *amātyas* the officiants and unrelated brahmin guests are to be regaled.<sup>17</sup> In this connection the mention of the neighbors (*pratīvēśa*) seems no less significant. They are said to prepare their own *odanas* making the communal nature of the feast even clearer.<sup>18</sup> Equally significant is the fact that the sacrificer’s wife—perhaps standing for his in-laws or allies—who elsewhere only comes in for a share in the *patnīsamīyāja* offerings after the main offerings here receives her own portion, a separate *odana* being taken out for her or separately cooked.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, to round out the picture, the sūtras of the Black Yajurveda briefly and laconically record one more feature of the festive meal. There is not only the copious mess of milk rice enriched with ghee. “In addition they slaughter cows (*gā abhighmate*),” as already mentioned. It is to be noted that this rule is not stated in the terms of the technical ritual vocabulary, such as *ālambhana* or *saṃjñāpana*. Instead the crude and profane verb *han-*, “to kill,” is used. Moreover, against the painstaking precision of the ritualistic codification the number of cows is not specified, nor are we told who “they” are.<sup>20</sup> Clearly, we are here outside the restricted sphere of the ritualists’ code. Hence also the uncharacteristic brevity of the statement. It would be a mistake to conclude that it is just a worldly and profane butchery. Worldly it certainly is, but it is not therefore less charged with sacral value. Otherwise, why should it figure here, in a ritual text? What the statement evokes is the exuberance of a communal festival that has its own sacrality—a sacrality that does not reside in the unseen but in the direct and tangible “goods of life,” in food and survival.

If there can be no doubt about the exuberantly communal nature of the *grhamedhin* sacrifice, the question is how, or rather how far, it could be fitted into the *śrauta* system of ritual. Its sacral nature centered on the community made it well-nigh impossible to ignore it. But by the same token it is irredeemably at variance with the transcendence-oriented absolute rule of ritual. The ritualistic method to deal with the problem was to circumvent the central issue by breaking it down into a welter of insignificant detail. The details, the disassembled remnants of a broken scenario, are then safe to be reused in the artificialist construction of ritualism. We have already seen this process at work in the case of the war and racing chariot and its erstwhile triumphant progress.<sup>21</sup> The sacrificial communal meal is deconstructed in a similar way.

In the first place we notice that the number of *odanas* taken from the exceptionally copious rice mess—unrestricted with Āpastamba—is reduced to three by the other manuals of the Black Yajurveda, while a “subsidiary” (*pratīvēśa*) *odana* is separately cooked on the southern *anvābhāryapacana* fire, in contradistinction to the *caru* from which the other *odanas* are taken and which is prepared in the normal way on the *gārhapatya*. This

extra *odana* is by most texts assigned to the sacrificer's wife.<sup>22</sup> Baudhāyana goes furthest in imposing the standard model and consequently has only one undivided *caru*, but it does hold on to the extra, separately prepared *odana* for "women and children."<sup>23</sup> The White Yajurveda tackles the problem of the *odanas* by offering a choice between two schemes.<sup>24</sup> Either the *caru* is divided into two (instead of three) *odanas*—in which case the characteristic usage of keeping the ghee with the *odana* is maintained—or there is only one undivided *caru*. The latter alternative is, as we saw, followed by Baudhāyana, but the White Yajurveda does not know the extra, *prativeśa*, rice mess anymore. In both cases, however, the *odana* feast—except for the slaughtered cows—has been fairly well "domesticated" to fit in with ritualistic regulation.

Among the details that should put us on guard against taking the ritualistic version of the feast at face value, we also should pay attention to the somewhat puzzling word *prativeśa*. It is used in two ways, both in the sense of "neighbor" (as one would expect) and as an adjective meaning "nearby" or "subsidiary" referring to the separate *odana* for the sacrificer's wife (or for "women and children"). The latter, adjectival use, however, seems to be the predominant one.<sup>25</sup> Although it seems quite acceptable to term the rice mess cooked separately on the southern fire the "nearby" one, the matter is suspicious. *Prativeśa* in that sense is not a usual and certainly not a technical term. In fact, this meaning occurs almost exclusively in the context of the *grhamedhin* sacrifice. Possibly the original usage was adverbial, *prativeśam*, "according to the number of settlers (*veśa*)."<sup>26</sup> To reduce the strongly communal nature of the *grhamedhin* sacrifice the ritualists would seem to have reinterpreted the expression either as "nearby," "subsidiary," or as the "neighbor" preparing his own *odana* by himself.<sup>27</sup>

But, however much reduced, the meal is still there. The obvious ritual slot for it was the moment in the standard *īṣṭi* when, after the offerings in the fire, the sacrificer and the officiants receive the *idā* portions of the sacrificial food.<sup>28</sup> However, apart from the strict and complicated regulation of the *idā* rite that by itself makes it difficult for others to be included, the eating of the *idā* portions, as we shall see further on, hardly qualifies as a communal meal, let alone a feast. Now it is sometimes prescribed that an *īṣṭi* is to end with the *idā* rite. Since there are no after-offerings (*anuyāja*), the *grhamedhin* sacrifice also ends with the *idā*. This rule makes it possible to have the *idā* rite all but imperceptibly shift into the general rejoicing and the feasting on cow's meat while at the same time keeping up the boundary between the strictly regulated *īṣṭi* paradigm and the communal festival. It is, in other words, the ritualistic art of ambivalence, avoiding the either-or and achieving the junction of two incompatible opposites. But the price to be paid was that the communal nature of the feast was broken up by setting the various categories of participants apart from each other—the sacrificer

and the officiants who eat the *idā* portions according to the standard paradigm of the *iṣṭi*, the members of the household (*amātya*), the wife or generally the women and children who have their separately cooked *odana* and finally the “neighbors” who prepare their own *odanas*. In this way, by deconstructing the communal character of the feast and by pushing part of it beyond the boundary of the *iṣṭi*, the ritualists managed both to evoke the scenario of an exuberant communal occasion and to safeguard the stern regulation of the desocialized *śrauta* system.

### 7.3

The *grhamedha* feast is, however, apart from the *odanas* also liberally provided with meat. This feature calls for some comment. While the *odana* as such can be smoothly converted into its *śrauta* counterpart, the *caru*, and assimilated to the standard *iṣṭi* scheme, the slaughter and consumption of cows cannot be accommodated so easily. To do so would require turning the whole operation into a regular animal sacrifice according to its intricate system of rules. Even the less intricate *grhya* version of the animal sacrifice would hardly have made the assimilation any easier. The domestic version does offer, though, the advantage of combining the animal victim with a cereal mess (*sthālipāka*).<sup>29</sup> But this would have meant that the sacrifice for the *grhamedhin* Maruts as a whole would fall outside the strict *śrauta* order of the *cāturmāsya*s. We saw already that the ritualists had some difficulty in assimilating the single *odana* ritual to their standardized vegetal *iṣṭi*. They could only do so after it had been cut loose from its association with meat. In fact, it would seem that the combination of *sthālipāka* and meat in the domestic sacrifice harks back to an earlier, more archaic stage of the *odana* ritual that precedes both the *grhya* and the *śrauta* ritual. But even though the *odana* was safely set apart from meat consumption, it remained refractory and was mostly relegated to the fringe of the *śrauta* ritual. And so, in the case of the *grhamedhin* Maruts, the rice mess was partly converted into a *caru* so as to fit into the *iṣṭi* paradigm and partly, as an *odana*, pushed outside the *iṣṭi*. The meat component again was set apart and made into a separate operation—“in addition they kill cows”—without any link with either *iṣṭi* or *odana*. In this respect too the ritualists followed the method—which we have already noticed with regard to the communal assembly—of taking out the sting from the original scenario by breaking it up into separate units.<sup>30</sup>

That the slaughter of cows in the context of a communal feast had an importance that the ritualists were forced to acknowledge is also attested by other instances in which such festivals are recorded in our texts. Even though they are only mentioned in passing these indications are richly suggestive. Interestingly we find such a carnivorous festival juxtaposed to a



regular *paśubandha*. The latter is the *śrauta* animal sacrifice that precedes the construction of the brick-built fire altar (*agnicayana*). This is the sacrifice that should provide the skulls that are to be buried under the altar. But, as we saw, the regular *paśubandha* cannot do that. So there is a separate sacrifice of a completely different, worldly nature. It is outlined with the summary brevity that is usual for such non-*śrauta* occasions. “They gamble, they [slaughter and] cook a bull, a ram and a billy-goat.”<sup>31</sup> It is this sacrificial festival with its carnivorous feast that provides the skulls the *śrauta* sacrifice can no longer deliver.

Here we meet with another feature of these non-*śrauta* sacrificial feasts—the game of dice. The contest aspect of the gambling will concern us later. At this point it will be sufficient to note that the dicing contest appears to be an important element in these carnivorous feasts. Although it is sometimes left out of the usually succinct statements, it is not a separate rite that stands by itself to be inserted or left out at will. It is directly connected with the killing and consumption of the animal. As such the game of dice would seem to have been an integral part of the non-*śrauta* scenario. At least, that is what is strongly suggested by two other remnants of such festivals that are found in the *agnyādheya* complex and in the royal consecration (*rājasūya*).<sup>32</sup> Dealing with the *agnyādheya* the Kāthaka states: “they kill a cow, they play dice for [shares in] her, they serve her up to those seated in the assembly hall (*sabhā*).”<sup>33</sup> Similarly in the *rājasūya*, when the king on returning from his ceremonial chariot drive has been enthroned, there is a dicing contest for a cow.<sup>34</sup>

Of particular interest is also the animal sacrifice in honor of the ancestors (*gopitryajña*) followed by a communal meal we find in the manual of Baudhāyana. Although this festival is meant to take place on the eve (*upavasatha*) of the *agnyādheya*—it is therefore also known as *upavasathagavī*, cow sacrifice on the *upavasatha* day—it rather seems to be a yearly feast in its own right, comparable to the *aṣṭakā* or New Year’s Eve celebration. Baudhāyana’s actual *agnyādheya* has its own *upavasatha* according to the standard format marked by the *brahmaudana* ritual. It is in the *gopitryajña* that Baudhāyana has the gambling episode that the other sūtras place in the course of the *agnyādheya*, where it is connected with the setting up of the fires in the assembly (*sabhā*) and residence (*āvasatha*) halls.<sup>35</sup> Baudhāyana presents the following outline. On the place where later the *dakṣiṇāgni*, the southern or cooking fire, will be established a fire is kindled by means of a firebrand from the domestic hearth, and south of it a dicing ground is arranged—a sort of *sabhā* of the ancestors. There four participants play a prearranged game of dice after which they get up saying: “The cow has been played (*dyūtā gauḥ*).”<sup>36</sup> Then the cow is immolated, heart and kidneys are put down for the deceased father, grandfather, and great-grandfather in the way of the usual rice ball (*pinḍa*) offerings, and the blood is made to

run out as an offering to demons and the inauspicious dead.<sup>37</sup> Finally the meat is shared out and consumed in a *śrāddha*-like meal.

Such a meal in honor of the ancestors seems to have been a fixed item of *upavasatha* celebrations. Thus we find it again in the reduced *śrauta* form of the rice ball offerings (*pindapitryajña*) in the paradigm of the standard *īṣṭi*, albeit that the meal is canceled.<sup>38</sup> And so the meal of the *gopitryajña* is doubled by a similar cow slaughter and ensuing meal on Baudhāyana's second *upavasatha* day, the eve of the actual *agnyādhēya*. Although the game of dice is lacking—it has been put out of harm's way by giving it a place in the *gopitryajña*, at a safe distance from the *agnyādhēya* proper—the meal reemerges again as a lavishly carnivorous double of the sober vegetarian *brahmaudana*. When the latter rites are concluded and the fire drill—with which next morning, at sunrise, the first *śrauta* fire will be kindled—is to be handed over, the sacrificer is told to give his instructions before reverting to the silence (*vācamyama*) he has to keep during the night until the next phase of the ritual.<sup>39</sup> He then orders that the brahmins be fed. Significantly it is not stated whether only the officiants are meant or a brahmin gathering not directly related to the *śrauta* procedures—the latter seems to be the more likely alternative. It will be of interest to look at Baudhāyana's discussion of this occasion that forms in fact a break in the strict *śrauta* order. "His *agnyādhēya*," we are told, "is provided with a lavish meal (*subhikṣa*). That is the success (*samrddhi*) of the *agnyādhēya*." However, the custom of celebrating the setting up of the fire with a carnivorous feast is not free from serious objections. "On that point they argue: 'he should not kill a cow, that is a cruel form.' Yet, one should kill [one], or on the contrary one should not kill one; or again one should even kill many cows; one's good fame will be accordingly, so Kātya [says]."<sup>40</sup> In Kātya's opinion then the cow slaughter and the meal offered to brahmins, after the *brahmaudana*, turn out to be a large prestige feast.

Understandably, the cow-killing-cum-festive-meal could not be completely ignored. It is to be noted though that in all these cases—*agnyādhēya*, *rājasūya*, and *gopitryajña*—care is taken clearly to distinguish the feast from the *śrauta* ritual. In the case of the ancestor feast of the *gopitryajña* this is already clear from its being entirely separate from the *agnyādhēya*, even though it is made out to be its *upavasatha*.<sup>41</sup> In this way Baudhāyana managed, as we have seen, to free the *agnyādhēya* proper from the dicing contest.<sup>42</sup> This sūtra held on, though, to the worldly meal of meat but insulated it in the gap between the *brahmaudana* ritual and the drilling of the *śrauta* fire next morning. The other sūtras have kept the dicing and the meal in the *agnyādhēya* where they are encapsulated as a self-contained insertion in the *īṣṭi* for Agni after the *śrauta* fires have been set up.<sup>43</sup> In a similar way dicing and meal are together with other non-*śrauta* rites inserted in the soma ritual of the *rājasūya*. Although they are given a place in the course of the stan-

dard *śrauta* ritual, they are spatially separated from it. They are not taking place in the sacrificial area proper but beyond it, in the *sabhā* or assembly hall, which has its own fire.<sup>44</sup> This fire, as well as the one in the residence or *āvasatha* hall, though set up as a *śrauta* fire, has no function in the *śrauta* ritual.

In sum then, as in the case of the *grhamedhin* sacrifice, the communal feast is consistently kept outside the *śrauta* ritual. At the same time we see here again the ritualists' art of ambivalence at work as they deftly manage to link the mundane feast with the *śrauta* ritual.

#### 7.4

The slaughter, dicing contest, and ensuing meal inserted in the *agnyādheya* and the *rājasūya* give rise to yet another point that should engage our attention. When discussing the *grhamedhin* sacrifice we have already surmised that the *odana* and the non-*śrauta* animal sacrifice were intimately connected or rather part of the same scenario before the ritualistic reform separated them and turned them into two different types of sacrificial ritual. This is also borne out by the dicing-cum-meal episodes we are discussing. We have noticed the objections, recorded by Baudhāyana, against the (non-*śrauta*) cow sacrifice as a cruel deed. It is not surprising therefore that the sūtras seem to suggest that the cow staked in the game is after the dicing replaced by an *odana*, which is then eaten instead of the cow. At least this is the opinion of the sūtra commentators. The theoretical basis for the substitution is again given by Baudhāyana. "In case he does not get a cow he gets a ram or a he-goat; or again having cooked an *odana* staked in the game (*dyūtam odanam paktvā*) and having liberally poured ghee or milk over it he thus achieves what is to be achieved with a cow."<sup>45</sup> The substitution is then justified by equating the cow's seed with the ghee or milk and the rice grains with the bull's seed, cow and rice mess being in this way equivalent. It should be noted though that the substitution here is in no way based on a rejection of cow slaughter as a cruel deed. But at any rate the substitution is given as perfectly legitimate.

However, when we look at the relevant text passages there is no mention of the cow being replaced by an *odana*, as recently observed by Harry Falk.<sup>46</sup> The passages that could suggest such a replacement to obviate the killing of the cow in fact say something else. The phrase "They declare the *odana* (*odanam udbruvate*)" in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa and taken over by Āpastamba and Baudhāyana is at best obscure.<sup>47</sup> The interpretation that the rice mess is declared as the substitute for the cow, though possible, is no more than a conjecture. The rare verb *ud-brū-* could more plausibly mean "to praise, to extol." Such praise is what the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa suggests: "the *odana* is the supreme lord, it makes him [the sacrificer] reach the high-

est prestige (*śrī*).” That indeed the *odana* is to be praised by the recipients is said elsewhere, in connection with the *brahmaudana*. Having eaten from it the four brahmin recipients should say to the sacrificer, “Your *odana* has succeeded.”<sup>48</sup> This simple compliment might be the remnant of the intended panegyric “declaration.”<sup>49</sup> But the only certain point is that—at least with the Taittirīyakas—a rice mess is involved in the meal and that something is to be “declared” about it. But this “declaration” has nothing to do with replacing animal sacrifice with a vegetarian rice mess.

Another passage that superficially might suggest avoidance of cow slaughter is the rule, given by the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā, that after they have gambled for the cow “they should not damage its joints (*tasyāḥ pārūṃṣi na himsyuh*).”<sup>50</sup> However, this appears to refer to a particular way of dissecting the victim, possibly meaning that its members should be left intact and that no cuttings (*avadānas*) are made from them. This is what the Mānava sūtra has in mind when it adds in explanation: “limb by limb they should take [the victim] apart.”<sup>51</sup> That the animal is indeed killed is stated clearly in the related Vārāha sūtra: “they should dissect it (*viśasyuh*) without damaging the limbs.”<sup>52</sup>

Finally we should also consider yet another statement in the sūtras. “They play the cow for rice.” This, however, does not warrant the conclusion that the cow is to be replaced by rice, for in the same breath we are told how the victim is to be dissected without damaging the limbs. What is of interest here is that both a cow and rice are staked in the game of dice and consequently in the ensuing meal. Here we can see what the part of the *odana* is in the dicing contest as well as in the meal. To put it simply it looks as if one party puts up the cow and the other the cereals that go into the preparation of the feast. Or, as Bharadvāja has it, “having prepared both types of food (*ubhayam annam*) he offers a meal to brahmins.”<sup>53</sup> In the next section we will have to return to this statement. What interests us at this point is the combination of meat and cereals. It seems that the *odana* was not just a simple vegetarian rice mess enriched with ghee. More likely the *odana* was a meat preparation, a mess of meat and cereals. Or, in other words, the *odana* was a method of preparing meat for consumption. This would also explain why only a few sūtras explicitly mention the *odana*, while pride of place is given to the cow and the meat it provides. If the *odana* was originally a well-known way of preparing meat there would be no need to mention it specifically and especially not in the excessively lapidary statements in which the rules for this non-*śrauta* ritual are couched. Incidentally the meat-cum-cereals mess would also clarify the otherwise less than self-evident equation of cow and *odana*. Originally they may indeed have been the same.<sup>54</sup> Gambling for the cow would then have been no different from gambling for the *odana*. Only when the *odana*, as a vegetarian rice mess, was ritualistically set apart from the animal victim, it had to be

specified as an item in its own right with its own separate ritual. Thus, as we saw, the *brahmaudana* ritual of Baudhāyana's *upavasatha* was doubled by a separately inserted meal of meat at the end of that day.

### 7.5

We already noticed in passing the element of rivalry and contest that is associated with the *odana* ritual and is given high profile in the game of dice. This element should now engage our attention.

Basically the dicing contest consists of at least two rounds, as was already recognized by Hertha Krick, the sacrificer having first to win the cow—which in actual fact he provides himself.<sup>55</sup> Having won the cow he then puts it up as the prize in a second round played by the participants in the *sabhā*, while he himself keeps out of the game.<sup>56</sup>

It must be admitted though that the *sūtras* are not a reliable guide to the actual procedure. They have preserved technical terms and conventional phrases but changed their order to suit their own ritualistic intentions. Thus, for instance, Bharadvāja starts by having the *adhvaryu* pronounce the conventional phrase also recorded by Āpastamba and Hiraṇyakeśin: “play the cow for rice grains (*vrīhibhyo gām dīryata*).” The second round starts with the words, literally taken from Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā: “that day they should play the cow for him in the *sabhā*.” In both cases Bharadvāja adds the instruction not to damage the joints, taken over from the single phrase in Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā.<sup>57</sup>

Even worse is Hiraṇyakeśin's presentation of the *rājasūya* gambling episode. While taking over the wording from Mānava, he completely bawdlerizes the latter's scenario.<sup>58</sup> Where Mānava's first round has four players gambling for the cow, Hiraṇyakeśin turns the players into four dice taken out so as to form the winning move in the game. He then adds (*apisrjya*) the conventional number of 104 dice (or perhaps, the other way around, adds the four to the 104) and after that has the players gamble for the cow. The verb *apisrjati* refers, with Mānava, quite plausibly to the staked and played cow that is admitted again to the sacrificer's herd at the end of the first round. Mānava's 104 dice, moreover, are not added or being added to, but set apart (*avohya*). Finally, the critical utterance, “break-through of the king” (*udbhinnam rājñabh*) is placed by Mānava after the 104 dice have been set apart, while Hiraṇyakeśin reverses the order and starts the proceedings with the breakthrough cry. Mānava's better understandable scenario clearly is Hiraṇyakeśin's source. The family likeness is unmistakable but so is the confusion.

Yet there is a method in the madness. The point is that our ritualists did not care for the dicing contest as such. But even though they insulated it as a self-contained non-*śrauta* insertion in the regular *śrauta* ritual, they

had to bring it in line with their system of ritual so as to render it innocuous. This they achieved in their usual way by dismembering the original scenario and rearranging the disparate elements. The dicing contest—which is no contest anymore—is replaced by separate ritual acts of handing the sacrificer conventional numbers of dice and by separate utterances (such as “break-through of the king”). In this way we can also understand that Hiranyakeśin blandly turns the four players into four dice which moreover usefully pushes the contest element further into the background. Nor are they interested in the stakes and prizes that anyway belong to the single sacrificer who has no opponent anymore or rather has to fill in for him. What is essential is not the game of dice but the ritualistic reordering of acts and utterances.

If we want nevertheless to try and recover the erstwhile coherent scenario we have to carefully pick our way among its scattered but telling debris. Thus the point that the game goes through at least two rounds seems fairly well established. Although the oldest texts—Maitrāyaṇī and Kāṭhaka—do not mention it, the sūtras in their various ways agree on this point. Also the ensuing festive meal of meat and cereals in the *sabhā*—all sūtras, in their *agnyādheya* sections, have the food brought to the *sabhā-sads*—is certain. Less clear, however, is the working of the two rounds. It can be supposed, as Hertha Krick and Harry Falk do, that first the sacrificer wins the staked cow—of course, provided by himself—and then has the other participants in the *sabhā* (according to Falk, his retainers) gamble in the second round for shares in it, while he stays himself out of the game. However, the sacrificer appears to participate in the second round too, for apart from still being handed dice, several sūtras—Mānava, Vārāha, Āpastamba, and Bharadvāja—significantly mention “what he obtains with it [i.e., the staked cow],” which then is offered as a meal.<sup>59</sup> What seems to be the case is that the sacrificer, originally, has to win the cow that he then must stake in another game.<sup>60</sup>

In this connection attention should be paid to the verb (*adhi-*)*paṇ-*, “to put up a stake (in a game).” “Putting up a stake (*paṇamāna*) the sacrificer wins *kṛta*” (Vāikhānasa), and “having won [by] staking (*adhipaṇam*) the *odana*,” or “having won the *odana* as the stake” (Hiranyakeśin). Also the phrase “they play the cow for rice” (Āpastamba, Hiranyakeśin, Bharadvāja) points in the same direction.<sup>61</sup> Although little attention has been paid to this point, it seems evident that the parties to the dicing contest have each to put up their stakes. The situation is reminiscent of the crude episode in the sempiternal struggle of devas and asuras when each party stakes a cow and vows to kill the other party’s cow in case of victory. And so, we are told, the conquered cow is killed in the house of the victor.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly this episode is told in explanation of the cow sacrifice on the *aṣṭakā* or New Year festival that is closely related to the *gopitryajña*. At any rate, it would seem

that in our dicing contest too each of the parties wagers a cow. This is also indicated by Mānava when he prescribes that the one who has lost must bring back the cow to the sacrificer's herd (*teṣāṃ yaḥ parājayate, sa yajamānasya goṣu paśthauhīm apisrjati*).<sup>63</sup> We may reasonably assume that originally it was not the sacrificer's but the loser's own cow, staked and lost in the contest, that ends up in the sacrificer's cattle pen.

The game of dice fits perfectly in the overall contest pattern of preclassical sacrifice. It was a real struggle for the ultimate stakes of life and death—as it still is in the great epic. As such the dicing contest not only slots naturally into sacrifice, it is itself sacrifice. But what about the meal that is the purpose of both sacrifice and dicing contest? It cannot but be part of the overall contest pattern. Thus the harmless-looking *odana* is considered a means for subduing one's foes. Like the “hunger” cow (*kṣudh*) sent over to the devas and made to return to the asuras to ruin them, the *odana* appears to be directly involved in the struggle.<sup>64</sup>

In less spectacular terms, what is meant becomes clear from the opinion held by Kātya, an authority of the Baudhāyana school of ritual, who plausibly stated that the sacrificer's fame depended on the number of cows slaughtered for the feast. It is, in other words, a competition for status and renown. And this means that participation in the festive meal was not limited to one's own party or household. As in the dicing contest the others, the competitors, must also take part in the feast. They are the guests “seated in the *sabhā*” (*sabhāsad*) who have competed in the dicing contest and are now taking part in the communal meal served—as the sūtras unanimously declare—to the same *sabhāsads* who have contributed to the lavishness of the feast the stakes they have lost in the game. Possibly this is what Bharadvāja means when he states that “what he obtains with the [cow he has wagered], both those kinds of food (*tad ubhayam annam*) he prepares and serves to the brahmins.”<sup>65</sup> One may think of “both kinds of food” as rice and meat, but the rice as we saw is mentioned as the stake put up by the other party when “they play dice for the cow against rice.” The two kinds of food would then still be one's own and that which one has won from the others.

At this point we should return again to the *grhamedha*. At first sight there is nothing to suggest any contest or even tension. It is all good-natured and profuse enjoyment of food by all and sundry, the whole household, neighbors, sacrificial officiants, and other brahmins—in short, *la grande bouffe*. But let us look again at the neighbor, the *pratiśeṣa*, who equally prepares his *odana*. On further inspection he turns out not to be just a neighborly neighbor but a rival. The sacrificer is in danger, we learn, of losing the benefit of his sacrifice to the *pratiśeṣa*, if the *hotṛ* would not refer to the sacrificer at the end of the ritual in the *śamyuvāka* or benediction. Furthermore, one may destroy a kingdom by putting the biggest soma-

pressing stone, the *upāṃśusavana*, on top of the soma vessel (*dronakalāśa*) while indicating by name the neighboring (*prativeśa*) people.<sup>66</sup> To say the least this shows a less neighborly side of the *prativeśa*. Even if the neighbor is not a declared enemy, he does seem to be a competitor. The *prativeśa* or neighboring settler may well be akin to the *vaiśya* whom we have already met, not as the representative of the lowly third order but as a warrior and magnate in his own right from whom it is worthwhile to take or rob the fire, while his head, when he has fallen in battle, may be prestigiously buried under the brick-built fire altar.<sup>67</sup> In short, he is the archetypal rival. So in the background of the joyous *gr̥hamedhin* feast we perceive the same contest pattern as in the dicing festivity. The *odana* the *prativeśa* is said to prepare would seem to be his stake in the festive game.

## 7.6

So far we have been looking at some special cases in which the original communal nature of the sacrificial meal, although dismembered and reduced, has left sufficiently telling traces to be recovered. These cases have shown us that it is not just a matter of communal peace and togetherness but is permeated by rivalry and fully participates in the contest pattern of sacrifice. But apart from these special cases that we encounter in the fringe of the *śrauta* ritual we also find the meal in a ritualistically reworked form right in the core of the generalized *śrauta* paradigm. I am referring, of course, to the *idā* ritual that has already come up a number of times in our discussion. We shall now have to look at it from the point of view of the communal meal.

Let us first briefly review the *idā* complex.<sup>68</sup> After the burnt oblations the minuscule “fore portion” or *prāśitra* offered to the *brahman* officiant and the substantial *idā* portions are cut from the remaining sacrificial viands. Then the *hotṛ* officiant invokes *Idā* as the deified cow goddess and food while sacrificer and officiants together hold the *idā* portions. In this invocation, the *idopahvāna*, a whole range of cosmic entities as well as the sacrificer and the officiants are invited to share in the *idā* food. In fact the litany consists in a series of reciprocal invitations: “called hither is So-and-So, may So-and-So call me.”<sup>69</sup> In more elaborate form such reciprocal invitations can be seen in the drinking of the soma beverage when sacrificer and officiants call on each other to drink from each other’s cups. This is in accordance with the practice of the *devas* who at their sacrifice offered the food in each other’s mouth.<sup>70</sup> Although such is not the practice of the *īṣṭi*, the original procedure, still reflected in the soma drinking, was to invite each other to share the food. But even without the elaborate etiquette of inviting each other the intention of a communal meal is still indicated by the simple rule concerning the eating of the *idā* portions. “They eat, with



the sacrificer as the fifth,” that is, the four officiants at an *īṣṭi*—*hotṛ*, *adhvaryu*, *brahman*, and *āgnīdhra*—joined by the sacrificer.<sup>71</sup> Significantly the *idā* is also the time for the distribution of the *dakṣiṇā* gifts to the officiants. One might expect, therefore, an impressive banquet, but our texts do not indicate anything of the kind and pass over the meal with a simple *prāśnanti*, “they eat.” Impressive is only the intricacy of the rules for manipulating and handing out the *idā* portions. For the observer there is nothing but the purely verbal part, the rising pitch of the *idā* litany, to mark the occasion as something special in the flat and uneventful course of the ritual.

However, when we turn to the brāhmaṇa texts the picture changes drastically. Behind the unexciting sequence of ritualistic minutiae there emerges a picture of conflict and violence that for being imaginary is no less suggestive. When discussing the *brahman* officiant we noticed that the *idā* complex is considered to be “the part of the sacrifice that is torn asunder” (*vyasta*) and that “they cut asunder the sacrifice in that they eat from the middle of it.”<sup>72</sup> We also noticed that the invocation of *Idā* is mythologically explained as a *vihava*, a rival invocation by which the gods made the cow goddess leave the asuras and turn to them. The *hotṛ* can even deprive the sacrificer of his cattle by reciting the litany “in the asura way.”

For our present purpose the interesting point is that the notion of the sacrifice being cut asunder by the *idā* ritual is explicitly based on the fact of eating. The *idā* complex is, therefore, equated with the domestic *pākayajña*.<sup>73</sup> For the same reason the *grhamedhin* sacrifice, as we saw, is characterized by features of the domestic ritual. From the ritualistic point of view the irruption of the differently oriented *grhya* code does, of course, form a breach in the *śrauta* order. The point is that the *pākayajña*, as the domestic manual of the Āpastamba school has it, is associated with life in the worldly community.<sup>74</sup> And the fulcrum of worldly life is the meal. The simple fact of eating forms the divide between the *śrauta* and the *grhya* ritual. Thus Yājñavalkya teaches that the twice-daily milk offering, the *agnihotra*, is not to be considered a *śrauta* sacrifice but a domestic *pākayajña*. His reasoning turns precisely on the point of eating. “Whereas in [*śrauta*] sacrifice all that has been cut off [and put] in the offering ladle is poured into the fire, [in] this [case] after offering in the fire, he goes up, rinses his mouth and licks up [the milk in the offering ladle]; this is [the characteristic] of the *pākayajña*.”<sup>75</sup> Although the argument is couched in strictly ritualistic terms—exclusive burnt oblation as against consuming what is left in the ladle—and characteristically passes over the meal, the point does not lack clarity. Eating is a worldly, social activity. “Who eats alone, has alone the evil,” as a R̥gveda passage says.<sup>76</sup> Food must be shared. It is clear why. Before it can be consumed it must be killed. The guest who is being regaled takes over the onus of the killing. It is this that gives a cutting edge to the festive meal and turns it into a life-and-death contest. But this is also the reason we saw for the

commentator Sāyaṇa puritanically to object to the notion that the *brahmaudana*'s purpose is in its being eaten. According to him its sole aim is to obtain the *śrauta* fire through the ritual act of putting three ghee-soaked logs of wood on the *odana*-cooking fire. If the meal is to be ritualistically valid it has to be deprived of its value that is in the contest.

If we can understand in this way why the *idā* ritual "cuts" or "tears asunder," there is also another side to it. I have referred already to expressions like the Greek "'cutting' an oath" (*horkia pista temnein*) or the Latin "'strike' a covenant" (*foedus ferire*), not to mention the more down-to-earth "striking" a bargain. If then the *idā* meal "cuts," it may equally seal a compact between the rivaling parties in the sacrificial contest. That this is indeed the case is brought out by the communal meal that concludes Baudhāyana's *gopitryajña*. After the sacrificer has given the parts of the cow that have been first exposed as offerings to the ancestors—heart and kidneys—he prepares an amount of food commensurate with his trust (*yathāśraddham*), (mutual) trust being expressed in food. Incidentally, we may here recognize in the food the *odana*—not otherwise mentioned in Baudhāyana's ancestor feast—we found as an essential element of the dicing contest. Then, "having cut up the cow share by share he offers the choice part (*vara*) to brahmins; all those who receive the meat become his *gobhājaśaḥ*."<sup>77</sup> The word *gobhājaśaḥ*, which occurs only here, can be analyzed as either "according to what each in his turn is assigned as his share in the cow" or "eater (*aś*), participant, of the cow sharing." In both cases the sharing out and eating constitutes a pact or alliance. If *gobhāj-aś* can be taken as a noun, it will have been a jural term meaning an ally or companion through sharing in the sacrificial cow.

## 7.7

Contest and alliance, then, are the two sides of the same sacrificial meal. This double function has gone deeper into the fabric of the *śrauta* ritual than its ritualistic reworking would make one suspect. This can be seen in the guest *iṣṭi* (*āritihyeṣṭi*) at the occasion of King Soma's arrival at the *sālā*, the sacrificial fire hall.<sup>78</sup> In pragmatic ritual terms this is the bringing of the soma stalks to the hall to be installed on a "throne." It forms part of the series of *iṣṭis* and other acts that lead up to the soma pressing, the *sutyā* day, of the actual soma sacrifice. As such the guest *iṣṭi* is a standard item in the basic paradigm of the soma ritual. In other words, it is not an incidental insertion but belongs to the core of the *śrauta* ritual. For a proper understanding two points should be kept in mind. In the first place it is a vegetal *iṣṭi* like any other according to the *śrauta* paradigm of the new and full moon sacrifice. Second, this *iṣṭi* represents the *argha* rite for the reception of important guests that typically belongs to the *grhya* ritual.<sup>79</sup> An essential

feature of the *argha*—apart from the honey mixture or *madhuparka*—is the presentation of a cow or another animal victim to the guest. The guest then orders the animal to be killed and its meat prepared with the word *kuruta*, “make (i.e., kill it).” Or, alternatively, he may choose to say *srjata*, “release (it).” But even in that case the general rule obtains that the guest reception should not be without meat. So a meal should be prepared with other meat and offered to the, as usual, ubiquitous but unspecified brahmins.<sup>80</sup> In other words, the *argha* is a domestic animal sacrifice not much different from the *grhamedhin* feast. Also the *odana* appears to be present. Lkening the cake (*purodāśa*) for Indra and Agni at the new moon sacrifice to the reception of honored guests the Śatapatha tells us that the cake offering is “as one would cook an *odana* [eaten by the guests] in common (*samānam*) or a he-goat, when two relatives or friends have together come to one’s place.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed the arrival of a guest is stated to be one of the occasions for a domestic animal sacrifice and a standard item of it is again the *odana*, which then in the way we have noticed before is combined with meat.<sup>82</sup>

The difficulty for the ritualists was, of course, to make the *argha* reception fit the mold of the normative vegetal *iṣṭi*. So they added characteristic features of the *śrauta* animal sacrifice—the drilling of the fire and seventeen verses instead of the vegetal *iṣṭi*’s fifteen kindling verses.<sup>83</sup> As the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa teaches, “they drill the fire at the arrival of ‘King Soma’; that is as when on the arrival of a human king or of an other deserving person (*arhat*) they kill an ox or a cow. So for him [King Soma] they kill it in that they drill the fire.”<sup>84</sup> Yet the animal victim is not totally absent from the scene of the guest *iṣṭi*. When the soma stalks are brought in a ceremonial procession to the *śālā* they are received at the entrance by the sacrificer holding a he-goat. At this point, as we already discussed, there is a tense confrontation in which the sacrificer has to play two opposite parts—that of the *dikṣita* bringing the soma that he has identified with by symbolically taking it into himself and, on the other hand, the master of the *śālā*. One would expect the he-goat to be the victim for the *argha* meal that should mediate between the two parties. But this being a vegetal *iṣṭi* according to the *śrauta* norm, the animal is spared. It is, however, immolated three days later, on the eve of the actual soma feast, in the sacrifice for Agni and Soma—the same gods that are honored in the guest *iṣṭi*.<sup>85</sup> It seems clear that the animal sacrifice at the arrival of King Soma has been divided over the vegetal *ātithyeṣṭi* at one end and the *upavasatha* sacrifice at the other.

But can we still recognize an underlying pattern of contest and alliance in King Soma’s guest *iṣṭi*? That there is a critical tension is indicated by the confrontation at the entrance of the *śālā*, however much the tension has been ritualistically effaced. But if we want to look at the original intention we have to look at the brāhmaṇa texts. There we have learned that the movement of King Soma, first to the *śālā* and then to the *mahāvedi*, is gen-

erally viewed as a conquering progress. It is not surprising, then, that we are told that at his arrival—bodily represented by the *dīkṣita*—he takes possession of the house, as does the human king. But this does not mean that its people are utterly subjected and deprived of their rights. On the contrary they are made into the king's sworn bondsmen who as such have a reciprocal claim on him. As the Maitrāyaṇi Saṃhitā explains, “therefore they call them *apivratas*, for they have a sworn claim (*vrata*) on him (*tasmād āhur apivratā ityapi hyeśām tasmīn vrataṃ*).”<sup>86</sup> An *apivrata*—an otherwise unknown jural term—apparently is someone who has a vowed or sworn right to a share, namely, in his lord's conquests. Thus it is elsewhere said that the regions sought a share (*apitva*) in the sun, “in the same way that one seeks to obtain a share in a king's conquest (*yathā rājani vijitiny apitvam icchanta evam*).”<sup>87</sup>

The *apivrata* then appears to be in the same class as Baudhāyana's *gobhājaś* whose alliance with the sacrificer is based on his share in the cow sacrifice. In the present case the bond will have been equally solemnized by a festive meal of meat and a rice mess, namely, the *argha* meal that has been converted into a standard *iṣṭi*. The *ātithyeṣṭi* has no meal taken in common. It is, however, immediately followed by the *tānūnaptra* rite that solemnizes the bond between sacrificer and officiants who touch the ghee left from the *iṣṭi*—a rite reminiscent of the participants touching the *idā* portions. The mediating function of the festive sacrificial meal between the parties it brings together in contest and alliance still shines through the inflexible *śrauta* scheme.

It would seem that the guest sacrifice is intimately related to the curious *sādyaskra* that compresses in one single day the whole of the soma paradigm, normally spanning five days from the introductory *iṣṭi* and the acquisition of the soma to the soma feast itself, the final bath and the concluding offering for Mitra and Varuṇa.<sup>88</sup> Although it is presented as an abridged soma sacrifice, its deviating features would require a separate investigation. Some of these features suggest a close association with agriculture, its *mahāvedī* being a barley field and the stand for the oblatinal fire a threshing floor, while the top of the sacrificial post is adorned with a bundle of barley stalks. For our purpose, however, the point of interest is the high profile of the hospitality ritual.

Notwithstanding its flat and compressed format the *ātithya* sacrifice—in the normative scheme the main item of the first and in this case the only day—seems to be the core of the ritual. One may even wonder whether the normative scheme of pressing, offering in the fire, and drinking the soma beverage with the attendant chants and recitations is not a later addition meant to bring the occasion in line with the regular soma ritual. Elaborate rules are given for the way the guests in the guise of the four chief officiants—*hotṛ*, *udgātṛ*, *adhvaryu*, and *brahman*—have to be invited and

brought from the four directions on chariots. There are also indications of a chariot race, if not of raiding.<sup>89</sup> This shows already that the *sādyaskra* is not just an abridged and compressed version of the *agniṣṭoma*, the basic soma paradigm. It is a prestigious occasion bringing in participants from the four regions.

As to the nature of this festive assembly, it is significant that according to Baudhāyana the officiants—originally the qualified guests—are invited with the words: “make me sacrifice [i.e., “officiate for me”] at an *īṣṭi*,” or “make me prepare food (*bhakta*) for you.”<sup>90</sup> According to this wording of the invitation the important point is not the standardized soma ritual, but either the *īṣṭi* or the festive meal. The two are apparently on a par, the one being according to the *śrauta* format, the other a domestic feast. So the *īṣṭi* can hardly be different from the *ātithya* or guest sacrifice. Now the *āthithyeṣṭi*—like the *grhamedhin* sacrifice—ends with the *idā* rite, the dismembered remnant of the erstwhile sacrificial meal. And, as in the case of the *grhamedhin*, it is followed by the slaughter of animals and the preparation of meat. For in the *sādyaskra* the *āthithyeṣṭi* is immediately followed by a triple animal sacrifice consisting of, in the first place, the he-goat for Agni and Soma—the victim that turned already up at the reception of King Soma but whose immolation was deferred to the eve of the soma pressing—the animal sacrificed on the *sutyā* day and finally the one for Mitra and Varuṇa. The latter two may be replaced by *carus*—the equivalent of the *odana*—which bring the matter still nearer to the *grhamedhin* sacrifice and generally to the ancient rice mess ritual.<sup>91</sup> What emerges, then, is the same pattern as that of the *grhamedhin* feast. The difference is that the exuberant meal of the *grhamedhin* Maruts is now, in the *sādyaskra* remolded as a *śrauta* animal sacrifice after the vegetal *ātithyeṣṭi*, the whole being brought under the sway of the regular soma ritual.<sup>92</sup>

There is, however, a more incisive difference. The *sādyaskra* strikingly brings out the element of contest and conflict that generally permeates sacrifice but is mitigated by the countervailing aspect of alliance. Its mythical origin gives full rein to conflict and competition. In the first chapter we discussed the sacrificial contest of the Ādityas and the Aṅgirasas.<sup>93</sup> By means of the *sādyaskra* the Ādityas stole a decisive march on the Aṅgirasas who had invited the former to their own sacrifice. Since, however, the cleverly devised *sādyaskra* could be absolved within one single day the Ādityas could invite the Aṅgirasas before the latter’s sacrifice could take place. The invitation to participate in a sacrificial feast is a challenge. The *sādyaskra*, as its mythical explanation shows, all but exclusively highlights conflict. It is, therefore, recommended if one wants decisively to beat one’s enemy.

What the *sādyaskra* points up is that the sacrificial meal by itself does not bring about a definitive resolution of conflict. It cannot because it can-

not remove the built-in tension and instability of the relations between donor and donee, host and guest. Between them is the onus of death. Conflict and alliance remained inextricably bound up with each other. And so were the parties. In this respect it is significant that the bond between the conquering king and his *apivratas* is dissolved by the *vaisarjana* or “release” libations after the progress from the *śālā* to the *mahāvedi* and the reinstallation there of the fire and the soma stalks. Likewise the *tānunaṣṭra* compact will end with the conclusion of the soma ritual. The contest is ever to be renewed. That also seems to be the reason why the *dīkṣā* or consecration does not precede the *sādyaskra* but follows it to prepare the next round when there will again be a competitive feast.<sup>94</sup> Conflict and alliance keep alternating in relentless cyclical repetition.

But it was precisely this relentless cycle of conflict that the ritualists set out to stop dead in its deep sunken tracks. It was not the critical point of sacrificial killing that was the focus of their attack. It might have been, as it was in Christian liturgy or Taoist ritual from which actual sacrifice was banned. The ancient Indian ritualists did give it thorough attention. They did indeed view it as an evil deed that required special rites and utterances to undo the harm. But instead of eliminating the kill they relegated it to the *śāmitra* shed to the north outside the ritual area proper and changed the procedure from decapitation to suffocation, leaving the victim lifeless but bodily intact. Their primary target was the unstable, ever-shifting web of conflict and alliance that found its comprehensive expression in the communal meal. The removal of the immolation from the place of sacrifice created a distance and took away the immediacy of the link between killing and eating, immolation and meal. Deprived of the immediate focus of tension the meal could the more easily be attacked.

## 7.8

After our discussion of various remnants of the sacrificial meal preserved in the permafrost of ritualism we are now in a position to survey the fate of the meal at the hands of the ritualistic reformers. In the first place we saw the meal being pushed beyond the spatial boundary of the ritual area—as was also done with the immolation—or beyond the strictly regulated duration of the ritual proceedings. Thus the *gr̥hamedhin* feast is to take place after the *śrauta* rites of the relevant *īṣṭi* are over, while the *brahmaudana* is eaten by the four brahmins before the *śrauta* part of the *agnyādheya* is to begin next morning. Similarly the festive carnivorous meal with which Baudhāyana doubles the staidly ritualized *brahmaudana* has been separated off and takes place after the latter ritual is over. Or again special time slots in the sequence of the *śrauta* ritual are prescribed for the insertion of a self-

contained unit of a non-*śrauta* activity, such as the dicing contest and the attendant meal that, moreover, take place outside the ritual enclosure in their own space, the *sabhā*.

In all these cases, though, the ritualists, exercising their ratiocinative art of ambivalence, took care to keep up at least the semblance of a link between the strictly controlled *śrauta* ritual and the unpredictable exuberance of the communal meal. Thus it was possible to suggest a continuity between the eating of the *idā* and the following “worldly” communal feast by having the *śrauta* ritual end with the *idā* rite. But in how far can the *idā* still count as a sacrificial meal taken in common? It will be of interest to see how the ritualists handled this essential item and managed to integrate it in their ritual system.

As we saw, it is clear that the *idā* solemnity was meant to be a communal feast. Nevertheless it is a strangely reduced and subdued affair that is moreover limited to the single *idā* slices. It is not even made clear whether they eat in common, as different from eating at the same time. According to the Śatapatha the sacrificer does not eat his *idā* share, at least not “visibly” but symbolically (by putting it on the *vedi* grass-bed before the *dhruvā* or “static” ladle), “lest he should eat before the sacrifice is over.”<sup>95</sup> There hardly seems to be any common ground with the “worldly” feast.

But apart from the *idā* there still is the bulk of the offering substance. This is divided in four parts, each part being assigned to one of the four officiating brahmins; the share of the sacrificer has already been divided off before, at the time of cutting out the *idā*. Here, however, even the pretence of a meal taken in common is given up. The participants do not even come together to receive their shares that are brought to them separately at their usual seats, while the *brahman* and the sacrificer do not eat their shares till later or even have to wait until after the *īṣṭi* is concluded. But this is not yet the end of it. To complicate matters even further there still is another item, the *anvāhārya* rice mess for the four officiants, which is brought up and divided right after the *idā* and the quartering of the remaining sacrificial viands. This *odana* is not different from the *brahmaudana* equally offered to four brahmins. But in contradistinction to the latter the *anvāhārya* mess is only put down with the words “Brahmins, this is your rice mess,” and that is the last we hear about it. We are not told when, where, or how it is consumed. The whole matter of eating, let alone a communal meal, seems shrouded in prudish silence. It is only when the ritual is completed and all is over that the sacrificer gives the order that unspecified brahmins should be given a big meal.<sup>96</sup>

The result of all this intricacy—here only given in bare outline—is that the festive meal that was clearly intended to be the apogee of the sacrifice was split up in different ways—*idā*, quartered cake, *anvāhārya* mess, and feeding of brahmins.<sup>97</sup> Broken up into various pieces that are dealt with

separately the festive communal meal was removed from the space and time span of the *śrauta* ritual. Only the minimal *idā* remained as a reminder of the original scenario. The fate of the sacrificial meal provides us with an exemplary case of the ritualists' method of deconstruction we already often have seen at work. It dismembers the once-coherent pattern but preserves its broken pieces in a new artificial construction that is no longer related to the surrounding world but on the contrary transcends it.

There was, however, another way to deal with the problem presented by the communal feast. In retrospect it is self-evident. This was the *dakṣiṇā*, the gift to the officiants, which already formed part of the *idā* complex. Thus we see that the *anvābhārya* rice mess and the other viands as well were transformed from a meal to a standard element of the *śrauta* code, namely, the *dakṣiṇā*.<sup>98</sup> Whether it is eaten—as the *brahmaudana* still is—or not is irrelevant. Relevant is only the ritual prescript that no sacrifice should be without a *dakṣiṇā* gift. This transfer had, moreover, the unexpected advantage of dealing definitively with the sacrificial kill too. Instead of being killed the animal was given away.

An interesting instance is the he-goat that is tied up during the night of the *upavasatha* preceding the setting up of the *śrauta* fires. The next day it is to be given as a *dakṣiṇā* to the *agnīdhra* officiant.<sup>99</sup> One wonders why the he-goat had to be tied up nearby during the preceding night. One may, of course, invoke the symbolic associations of the he-goat as a representative of Agni, but if the purpose is to be found in symbolism there are less circumstantial means to express it. The obvious explanation is that it was the sacrificial victim of the *upavasatha* feast turned appropriately into a *dakṣiṇā*.<sup>100</sup> This he-goat strongly reminds us of the one that was held at the entrance of the *śālā* at the arrival of "King Soma." There its function could hardly be anything else than to provide the meat for the *argha* feast. Eventually the he-goat is, as we noticed, indeed immolated, albeit later as the *upavasatha* victim on the eve of the actual soma sacrifice. In the *agnyādhya*, however, its life is spared and the erstwhile victim is given as a *dakṣiṇā*. A similar case is that of the horse that accompanies the newly drilled fire on its eastward procession to the *āhavanīya* hearth and afterward is given as a *dakṣiṇā* to the *brahman* officiant. But, as already observed by Hertha Krick, this *dakṣiṇā* is a transposition of the horse sacrifice (*aśvamedha*).<sup>101</sup> Instances of this kind abound.<sup>102</sup> In fact, the transposition is in line with the ritualistic drive to remold awkward elements into standard features of the *śrauta* code. As the *ratha* or chariot was changed into a chant, the *rathan-tara*, so the immolation and the ensuing meal were turned into a *dakṣiṇā*. Significantly, the chariot too survived in some cases as a *dakṣiṇā*. The latter transposition was only easier.

Even more than a self-evident way of dealing with immolation and sacrificial meal, the *dakṣiṇā* had the potential to put the institution of sacrifice



out of commission. Although the gift did not provide for a central arena it could well replace sacrifice. And instead of an institutional arena it could establish an expansive network of relationships fed by gift giving. As a free gift without expectation of a return it could even replace the element of self-denying destruction in sacrifice. In this way we can understand that Manu prescribes the gift, *dāna*, as the primary religious act for our morally fallen fourth or *kali* age instead of sacrifice, which man is no longer capable of maintaining.<sup>103</sup> However, like sacrifice and the sacrificial meal, the institution of the gift creates comprehensive relations that are permeated by the shifting alternation of conflict and alliance. The free gift is hard to realize and, in fact, as implausible as the self-denial in sacrificial token destruction. The gift is an act of mutual trust—in Indian terms, *śraddhā*. If unanswered the trust is broken. Against this background we can understand why the Mīmāṃsā theoreticians rejected the notion of the *dakṣiṇā* as a gift. Instead they neutralized the *dakṣiṇā* by arguing that it is a salary for services rendered.<sup>104</sup> In so doing they deprived the *dakṣiṇā* of its comprehensive binding force. They turned the technical ritual service and its payment into an incidental transaction that has no mutually binding consequences beyond the service and its remuneration. But it is a service for which there is no compelling need anymore. While the guest was needed in contest and alliance, his successor, the expert officiant, is not. It is left to the individual's choice whether he wants to be a *śrauta* sacrificer and so will need the expert's services. But he may as well prefer to remain a domestic sacrificer who can himself perform the ritual. Here the point of no return is long passed. The ritualism of the *śruti* had definitely hived off from the lived-in social world. The *dakṣiṇā* turned salary could only underwrite ritualism's splendid isolation.

## 7.9

There was, however, one type of sacrifice that was destined to have a fertile future. I am referring to the *agnihotra*, the twice-daily milk offering in the fire, the simplest and by far the most frequent sacrifice that requires the services of only one officiant but may as well be performed by the master of the house himself. On the other hand it has given rise in the later Vedic texts and especially in the Upaniṣads to a surprising amount of ritualistic and ritualism-induced speculative thought.<sup>105</sup> It was and became ever more the archetypal sacrifice. *Agnihotrin*, one who regularly performs the *agnihotra*, is practically synonymous with *āhitāgni*, one who has set up the *śrauta* fires. But it is equally binding on the domestic sacrificer.<sup>106</sup>

One wonders why it was that the *agnihotra* gained its privileged position. No doubt its simplicity and frequency will have contributed to its extraordinary fortune. But one may doubt whether this was the decisive

factor. One might consider the fact that the *agnihotra*, being a milk offering, does not require sacrificial killing. But this does not seem to have been a consideration with the ritualistic and speculative thinkers. At least this point does not come up in the ample discussions in the brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. Rather it is the *agnihotra*'s concern with fire and food. As for the fire, the *agnihotra* can be viewed as the regular servicing of the fire so as to keep it permanently going, either as the *gārhapatya* or as the domestic fire. Here we may even look for its archaic origins. But as it turned out it was the aspect of food and hospitality that were decisive for the later development of the *agnihotra*.

Food and hospitality are, of course, a dominant concern of all sacrifice. But in the case of the *agnihotra*, notwithstanding its unassuming soberness and simplicity, food and feeding take up a special place. Precisely for this reason we have seen Yājñavalkya arguing for setting the *agnihotra* apart from the *śrauta* sacrifice and classifying it as a domestic *pākayajña*. For him the decisive point was that the oblation substance, milk, was consumed directly from the offering ladle. While the meal could not be entirely denied its place in the *śrauta* sacrifice, it was nonetheless reduced and put at a distance from the burnt oblation if it was not altogether removed from the space and time of the ritual. But in the *agnihotra* it was directly linked with the oblation itself. One might even say that the eating was part of the oblation. It was this point, ritualistically sharpened, at which the later development announces itself.

Generally speaking the *agnihotra*'s particular concern with food and hospitality is quite clear in the brāhmaṇas. "What he eats after having offered [in the fire] that he offers in the human beings; and thereby men exist."<sup>107</sup> Here we see that it is not just a matter of the sacrificer himself eating. The intention is to make men share in the food. Indeed hospitality is a recurrent theme in discussions of the *agnihotra*. In answer to the ritualistic question of where to make the oblation if one's fire is somehow not available and another cannot be procured, various alternatives are given such as the ear of a goat, more plausibly the right hand of a brahmin, a bunch of *kuśa* grass or the waters. But apart from the ritualistic question and its various answers it is ruled that at all events "he should not refuse hospitality to a brahmin."<sup>108</sup> As we know, the brahmin is the guest *par excellence*. Now regaling one's guests with no more than milk, wholesome though it is, would seem to be somewhat parsimonious. But although milk is the paradigmatic offering substance, we learn that, apart from milk preparations and ghee, also barley gruel (*yavāgu*), our old acquaintance the *odana*, rice grains, meat, and soma may be offered.<sup>109</sup> In fact, the whole range of sacrificial substances is included, and one is tempted to conclude that the *agnihotra* has become the repository of the food and hospitality value that was removed from the other *śrauta* sacrifices. Hospitality is even

made out to be the essential content of the *agnihotra*.<sup>110</sup> Incidentally, it is then understandable that the *agnihotra* is also affected by the aspect of contest and conflict we have seen associated with the meal. And indeed we learn that the otherwise seemingly innocuous offering suddenly turns up in one passage as a *vajra* weapon the sacrificer hurls every evening and every morning at his rival—fortunately without any known consequences.<sup>111</sup> Imaginary though the powerful weapon may be, it seems significant for the erstwhile agonistic aspect of the meal.

The prominence of food and meal is also borne out in a curious and in fact contradictory way. The *kṣatriya*, otherwise the typical sacrificer, is excluded from performing the *agnihotra*, and the brahmin is forbidden to officiate for him. The reason given for his exclusion is that he is engaged in improper and impure activities; he eats impure food, plunders, and kills.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, we are told, the *kṣatriya*, instead of performing the *agnihotra*, has food offered to a brahmin. But here we end up in an aporia. How should the brahmin accept food from the impure *kṣatriya*? We shall come back to this conundrum soon. But, apart from that, it clearly shows that the essential point of the *agnihotra* is the meal offered. Even without the burnt oblation the *agnihotra* is valid as long as hospitality is practiced.

But how was this to be brought in line with the ritualistic code that rejects the meal in favor of the burnt oblation? The answer is simple. In the same way that the meal could be turned into a *dakṣiṇā* it could be considered to be an oblation, namely, in the brahmin viewed as Agni.<sup>113</sup> This links up with the notion of establishing the fire in one's inner self,<sup>114</sup> and with the *prāṇas*, the breaths, as fires.<sup>115</sup> But then why the brahmin and why not the sacrificer himself? As we will see it was indeed the latter alternative that won the day.

In the previous chapter it was argued that the brahmin was not a priest and in fact never fully became one. His lineal ancestor was the consecrated warrior, the *vrātya*, who spawned the consecrated soma sacrificer-to-be, the *dīkṣita*. Setting out on his expedition to obtain by force and astuteness the goods for sacrifice he has no fixed residence and consequently no permanent sacrificial fire. Instead he has taken the fire into himself by means of the fire-drilling sticks. Therefore he cannot act as a sacrificial patron. Or, as the Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā tells us in a different vein, the *rājanya*'s warlike activities constitute his *agnihotra*. "For whatever he 'makes' (*karoti*), whatever he kills, whatever he wins, whatever he obtains, whatever obeisance he receives from the people, that is the *agnihotra* of the *rājanya*."<sup>116</sup> And therefore it should not be performed for him. Here the process of obtaining the goods for sacrifice is put in the place of sacrifice itself, foreshadowing the notion of the king's office being a lifelong *sattra* that ends with death, his final sacrifice.<sup>117</sup> Similarly the warrior on his booty-winning circuit may find death. But until the time he either finds sacrificial death or comes

through to establish himself as a sacrificial patron with the goods he has acquired, he can not act as a sacrificer. During his trekking campaign he cannot eat meat lest he eat his own property acquired at the risk of his life—except at the sacrificial feasts of the settled magnate where he goes as a guest and competitor or forces his way in as a challenger. Hence the vegetarian diet of the *dikṣita*. By virtue of his vow he only takes boiled milk, which therefore is known as *vrata*, vow. It is the same milk that is the standard offering in the *agnihotra*. It is not surprising that, even without invoking the various speculations about the *prāṇas*, the *dikṣita*'s consumption of the *vrata* milk is consistently equated with the *agnihotra*.<sup>118</sup> Having taken the fire into himself until the time that he will “exteriorize” it and set it up in his own sacrificial arena he can only serve it by offering the *agnihotra* milk in himself, that is, by feeding on his milk diet. The *agnihotra* is after all a meal.

Here, it would seem, we hold the origin of the so-called *prāṇāgnihotra*. The *dikṣita* is a *prāṇāgnihotra* sacrificer *avant la lettre*. As long as he is barred from setting himself up as a munificent sacrificer, he can only “offer” the food in himself, be it the *vrata* milk or what he obtains as a guest or challenger from the sacrificial patron. As the patron's merit and honor depend on the lavish spread he provides, so the consecrated warrior is honor bound to be its recipient. In this respect the *dikṣita* is like the classical brahmin who is both the typical *prāṇāgnihotrin* and the guest *par excellence*. The difference is that it is no longer a cyclical phase but a permanent state. The cycle has collapsed. The *dikṣita* was fused with his counterpart, the munificent sacrificer. The guest and challenger subsisting on *vrata* milk was now at the same time the sacrificer. Conversely, now that the sacrificer-donor and the guest-recipient were fused in the single *yajamāna*, the *vrata* meal could only be a full-fledged sacrifice, the *prāṇāgnihotra* ritualistically elaborated for the purpose. Similarly the *dikṣita*, being at the same time the sacrificer who sets the *brahman* of sacrifice in motion, must logically be a *brāhmaṇa* from the outset. And indeed, as we have seen, he is proclaimed such at his consecration. Whereas the *brahman* power originally had to be won or vindicated in the sacrificial arena, it was now straightforwardly ascribed. In short, the classical *brāhmaṇa* had arisen. Permanently fixed in his role he ideally upholds in, by, and for himself alone the ultramundane order of the ritualistic *śruti*. As the *brāhmaṇa* is fixed in his role, so is the warrior—once a warrior, always a warrior.<sup>119</sup> And this explains the conundrum of the *kṣatriya*'s disqualification for performing (or having a brahmin perform it for him) the *agnihotra*. On the other hand it is his duty to support and feed the brahmin, even as many brahmins as he can. But how is the brahmin to accept the food of the violently ill behaved *kṣatriya*? Even though this is neither the origin nor the aim of the *prāṇāgnihotra*—which is based on the extrasocial, ultramundane individualization of the sacrificial fire cult—it does provide

the brahmin a way out of his quandary. The *prāṇāgnihotra*, as Henk Bode-witz has pointed out, is simply a *bhojanavidhi*, a ritual for the brahmin taking his meal.<sup>120</sup> However, its significance goes far beyond this. It enables the brahmin to be in the world but not of it. Turning his meal into a sacrifice, performed in and by himself alone, he sets himself free from the surrounding world and eats his meal in sovereign independence. Instead of a guest dependent on his *kṣatriya* patron he turns himself into the ideal sacrificer (to the point of excluding the patron as a sacrificer). Obviously this is a fiction. How could he all by himself, without any cooperation and reciprocity—not to speak of warrior patronage—obtain his sustenance or, generally speaking, survive at all? However, the point is that the meal has been deprived of its sacral and binding value. In that sense it is no meal at all anymore. It is a ritualistic act that points toward man's capacity to transcend the world and ultimately himself.

## *Epilogue*

### 8.1

WITH THE *prāṇāgnihotra* the sacrificial cult of the fire was stretched to its ultimate limit. Ritualistic reflection had pushed it to the turning point where it transcended and thereby canceled itself. From its beginning, since man's appropriation of the fire, its care and exploitation had been an inexhaustible source of creative imagination and ratiocinative reflection. Made and cultivated by man the fire—*his* fire—was directly related to him in an ambivalent and tensely personal way. It was man's creative self—witness the ancient and widespread motives of the "fire soul"—that set him apart from the surrounding world and enabled him to master it. But it equally was and remained a dangerously self-willed and unpredictable element—both an "external soul" and the "enemy within," encompassing man's life and death.

While in ancient Iran the fire, enthroned in its temple, was made to transcend self and community, the Vedic ritualists went the opposite way. They maximized the personal bond of man and his fire. The fire and its cult were drawn into man's individual self, the *ātman*. Not the ambivalent and unpredictable fire but the *ātman* was to encompass and control life and death. As such it could not but be the seat of immortality. In other words, the individual self, the *ātman*, was made to transcend both fire and community. Only as the household fire, established at the time of marriage, it kept its place and social function.

We have seen how this was formulated in the mythical terms of the Śatapatha.<sup>1</sup> In the beginning neither the gods nor their rivals, the asuras, were immortal. Interestingly, immortality is here directly linked with the *ātman*. "They were both without an *ātman*, for they were mortal; he who has no *ātman* is mortal." Only Agni, the fire, was immortal. Fervently chanting and exerting themselves the gods finally beheld the rite of setting up the fire, "that immortal *agnyādheya*." They then gained immortality by establishing the fire within themselves (*antar ātman*) and thereby obtained an *ātman*, the seat of immortality, as well. And so they overcame the asuras.

At this stage of advanced ritualistic thought there needed be no fear anymore of losing or being separated from one's fire—a fear that is still amply attested in the texts.<sup>2</sup> For, as the sequel to our passage tells us, once the fire has been ritually established in the inner self through the *agnyādheya*,<sup>3</sup> it is the sacrificer's inalienable true identity, in short his *ātman*. Its maintenance does not require the fuel and ghee of the external fire but speaking and acting truth (*satya*). Here the fire disappears behind the *ātman*. The sacrificial cult of the fire was turned inward to become the ritualistic cultivation of the sacrificer's transcendent self.

This sacrificer is the *ātmayājīn*.<sup>4</sup> While the *devayājīn* performs the sacrifice to serve the external macrocosmic powers of the gods, the *ātmayājīn* is exclusively concerned with the self. Therefore, we are told, the *ātmayājīn* is the superior sacrificer, the *devayājīn* being no more than an inferior offering tribute to his superior. What distinguishes the “self-sacrificer” is his knowledge—the knowledge, that is, of the equivalence of ritual and self. “This member is perfected (*samskriyate*) for me by that [rite], this member is put in place (*upadhīyate*) for me by that [rite].” Thus he is freed from his mortal body, from evil, and construes with Ṛg-, Yajur-, and Sāmaveda and with oblations a transcendent heavenly body.

Some ink has been spilled over the question of whether or in how far this and similar passages dealing with the *ātmayājīn* refer to an “internal” sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> It is certainly “internalized” in that it is exclusively concerned with the inner self, regardless of the ritual being “externally” performed or only in the mind. But this is not the relevant question. The essential point is the sovereign independence of the *ātmayājīn* who performs the sacrifice by himself and for himself as against the subservience of the *devayājīn*.

This is what the brāhmaṇa texts meant by the frequent statement that “man is sacrifice” (*puruṣo vai yajña*). The equation derives from the cosmogonic immolation of the cosmic *puruṣa*, celebrated in the well-known Ṛgveda hymn 10.90. As the cosmic *puruṣa* was sacrificed so is man. The texts are indeed replete with the notion of self-sacrifice. “Le seul sacrifice authentique serait le suicide,” as Sylvain Lévi bluntly concluded.<sup>6</sup> Sacrificial ritual, however, aims in its ambivalent way to work its way around the ultimate consequence by having the sacrificer “buy himself free” from death. This is not a simple matter of substitution. The goods of life must be won by facing and overcoming death. Only such goods, won at the risk of one's life truly are man's sacrificial “body.” In principle any sacrificer is a “self-sacrificer.” The ritualistic *ātmayājīn* concept takes up and reworks this pattern. There being no contest anymore it is the autonomous ritual *per se* that enables the self-sacrificer to construe his transcendent sacrificial “body” that is no longer threatened by death. This transcendent body is no other than the *ātman* of the self-sacrificer, the erstwhile sacrificial *puruṣa* who no longer undergoes sacrifice but has mastered and integrated it. Here we

come upon an entirely different and new view of man and his self. It meant the “discovery” of the *ātman*.

## 8.2

The Śatapatha tells us, in its own terms, how this discovery was made. It was by “continuously chanting and by ritual exertion” that the gods finally beheld “that immortal *agnyādhēya*.” In other words it was through ritual—or rather through ritualistic reflection on the fire and its ritual control (the *agnyādhēya*)—that the *ātman* as the principle of immortality was found. The Śatapatha still speaks here the language of mystery and vision but it is clear that a decisive point had been reached. The intimate connection of man and his fire was no novelty, but it was a hazardous and uncertain relationship. This relationship was now transformed into the dead certainty of identification. Ritually established in the inner self the fire is the *ātman*, inalienable and permanent.

We may gauge the extent of the change when we consider what F. B. J. Kuiper has aptly termed “Aryan Mysticism,”<sup>7</sup> and its central theme, the cosmic mystery of the “birth of Agni, or the vision of the sun in the darkness.”<sup>8</sup> Kuiper draws attention to the parallelism of the mysterious “sun in the rock” (*svar yad āsman*) beheld by the seer and to the later upaniṣadic thought on the *ātman* “placed in the cavity” (*nihito guhāyām*).<sup>9</sup> That the latter continues the visionary expression, as Kuiper suggests, can hardly be doubted. There is, however, a decisive difference. The shimmering personal vision of the hidden fire and its birth has been replaced by the impersonal truth of the immortal self.

That it was the reflective cult fire that gave rise to the concept of the *ātman* seems to be confirmed by the Buddha’s spirited rejection of the fire cult and the ritualistic *ātman* concept. We already saw how the Buddha overcame the Kassapas’ fire.<sup>10</sup> This comes out even more dogmatically in the two sermons—the one on the Non-Self, the other on the flames that scourge the world. Hermann Oldenberg has already pointed out their similarity.<sup>11</sup> For the Buddha too the brahmanical cult fire and the ritualistic *ātman* concept are intimately tied in with each other.

While the brahmanical ritualists put everything on cultic control and stability of the fire to the point of making it disappear behind the transcendent *ātman*, the Buddha pointedly seeks to extinguish the fire while stressing the impermanence, and therefore irrelevance, of the self. Even though they moved in radically opposite directions, both sides start from the same point. But both, each in its own way, relegated the fire to the background. The sacrificial cult of the fire had run its course to the very limit—where it turned around either to be fused with the *ātmayājīn*’s transcendent self or to be extinguished by the self-less monk.



What gave the concept of the *ātman* its thrust and overwhelming importance was the breakup of the agonistic pattern of sacrifice and the resulting monistic ritualism that found its fulfilment in the sovereign independence of the “self-sacrificer.” This meant that man as a sacrificer was put in the center as the sole actor transcending both gods and humans.

Before, prior to the onset of ritualism, he had equally been at the center of the sacrificial drama. But he was not alone there. The central position of the sacrificer was not a foregone conclusion, free from risk, but open to challenge and depending on the outcome of the sacrifice. The center was insecure and unstable. It could not be otherwise, for sacrifice aimed at the winning of life out of death and so turned on their insoluble conflict. In sacrifice the sacrificer enacted the enigma of life and death. Like the sacrificial man of the *Puruṣa* hymn he was himself the sacrifice, both sacrificer and victim alike, the nexus—the *bandhu* or *nidāna*—of the riddle expressed in the enigmatically involute conclusion of the *Puruṣa* hymn, “by sacrifice the gods sacrificed sacrifice, that were the first ordinances.”<sup>12</sup> Man, the *puruṣa*, was both the riddle and its resolution. But it could not be known beforehand who would vindicate himself as the successful sacrificer by overcoming death to win life. The monistic reform achieved by the Vedic ritualists held on to the central position of the sacrificer. Eliminating the contest they even maximized and stabilized it. But thereby they completely changed the institution of sacrifice. When they stated that “man is sacrifice,” this was no longer an enigma but a flat, unmysterious equation that made man as a sacrificer a universe unto himself governed by the static rule of ritual. It was this that gave the *ātman*, the single sacrificer’s self, its transcendent quality as the principle and seal of immortality.

But what is required of the sacrificer to realize his transcendent self? In principle the ritual, no longer a hazardous open-ended process but a closed and static structure, requires no more than unquestioning submission to its system of rules. But this does not make the sacrificer any better than the inferior *devayājīn* who serves the gods as one serves a king or patron and so cannot reach out for the transcendence held out by the ritual. To have part in the ritual’s transcendence the sacrificer must know—we may say “internalize”—the equivalence of ritual and self, as does the *ātmayājīn* whose knowledge enables him to construct his transcendent self. Hence the ubiquitous phrase “he who knows thus” (*ya evam veda*), namely, the equivalences.<sup>13</sup> “He who knows thus triumphs over recurrent death, death has no hold over him, death is his Self, he attains the fullness of life, he is one of the divinities.”<sup>14</sup> Even though this passage, as we shall see, is not as unequivocal as it would seem, it is no wonder that such knowledge is deemed sufficient to attain immortality after death.<sup>15</sup> The decisive point is the internalized knowledge, the full awareness of the equivalences. It lifts him “who knows thus” above the alternation of life and death. He is no longer their

unstable nexus but the living connection bridging the gap between world and transcendence.

Here we come on the other transcendent concept, the *brahman*, “l’énergie connective comprimée en énigmes,” as Louis Renou rendered this much-debated term.<sup>16</sup> We have seen that the royal sacrificer, after having victoriously exposed himself to death, is proclaimed the *brahman par excellence* who holds the ultimate riddle of life and death.<sup>17</sup> As the successful sacrificer he is the one “who knows thus,” “le possesseur de ces révélations connectives qui sont la solution du *brahman*-énigme. Il est le *bandhu* vivant,” the living nexus.<sup>18</sup> Here we see the intimate relationship of *brahman* and *ātman*. In an enigmatic Atharvaveda verse those who know the *brahman* are said to know the power possessed of *ātman* (*yakṣam ātmanvat*) residing in “the lotus with nine doors”—a reference to the human body.<sup>19</sup>

As in the case of *ātman*, ritualism wrought a fundamental change in the concept of *brahman*. This becomes clear at once, when we compare the paradoxical riddle formulations of the *brahmodya*, the ancient verbal contest prescribed in the horse sacrifice, with the straightforward this-is-that identifications of elements of the ritual with macrocosmic and microcosmic entities.<sup>20</sup> In the *brahmodya* the contenders, two at a time, acted out the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the antithetical terms, with which they made up their paradoxical formulations. The *bandhu*, the hidden nexus, was to be “seen” or “found”—as the seers searching in their heart found the *bandhu* of being in nonbeing—but not expressed.<sup>21</sup> In the *brāhmaṇa* expositions, however, the *bandhu* was made fully explicit, not to be “seen” but to be learned. The enigmatic *brahman* was resolved in a *brāhmaṇa*, an explanatory identification.<sup>22</sup> Or the *bandhu* was dissolved in separate elements, cut loose from each other and arranged in strings of entities.

Similarly, the contenders had been held together by the hidden nexus that was at stake in the verbal contest. But when the Gordian knot, the *bandhu* of their antithetical relations, was cut, they were either fused with each other—as we have seen the sacrificer and his challenger were—or they were set apart as separate actors with specific functions, such as sacrificer and officiant. Thus the soma sacrificer who originally had to vindicate himself as the *brahman par excellence* was now made a *brāhmaṇa* from the start and proclaimed as such already at his consecratory bath. On the other hand, the *brahman* was now an officiant with a specific technical-ritual function.

No longer was the personal vision of the mysterious *brahman* power decisive. What counted was the impersonal knowledge of the ritualistic system propounded in the *brāhmaṇa* expositions. Thus the Śatapatha explains the enigmatic *bandhu* of being in nonbeing as the mind (*manas*), because the mind is neither being nor nonbeing.<sup>23</sup> The *brāhmaṇa* text then follows this up with a series of hypostases of the mind (speech, breath, eye, hearing, work, and fire), each producing its *ātman* through the ritual. The exposi-

tion then ends with the decisive statement that “by knowledge alone these fire [altars] are built for him who know thus,” “even while he is asleep.”<sup>24</sup> Here we see the ultimate self-sacrificer, whose knowledge puts him beyond being and nonbeing, life and death.

The way the ritualistic understanding of the *brahman* came about appears to be much the same as the rise of the *ātman* concept out of the fire cult. As the mystery of the hidden fire, the “sun in the rock,” led to the *ātman* “placed in the cavity” of the heart, so the seers found “the *bandhu* of being in non-being, by searching in the heart.” The locus of both *ātman* and *brahman* is the inner self, the heart. This heart, as Kuiper observes, is equated with the cosmic mountain.<sup>25</sup> There the hidden Agni who understandably is himself a “seer (*kavi*) of the *brahman*” is enclosed. So fire, self, and *brahman* were already diffusely and shiftingly associated with each other in the visionary utterances of the Vedic poets and located in man, himself the solution of the cosmic riddle of life and death.

Ritualism, however, set them apart as separate entities. It specified and stabilized the *ātman* as the truth of the individual and inalienable Self, the seat of immortality. The classic visionary *brahman*, on the other hand, was changed into the positive knowledge of ritualistic truth required for realizing the Self. In the same way as the gods attained immortality by establishing the fire in the inner self, so they are said, in almost the same words, to have become immortal when they reached (completion) through the *brahman* power.<sup>26</sup> Therefore the two separate entities of *ātman* and *brahman* had to be fused through identification. It was ritualism that achieved the decisive break and so led over to the Upaniṣadic *ātman-brahman* doctrine.

### 8.3

The monistic ritualism of the single sacrificer had broken the sacred world of sacrifice and in the end had spirited itself out of the world into a transcendental sphere of its own, accessible only to the solitary individual “who knows thus.” The societal function of food and gift distribution, once held by agonistic sacrifice but vacated by the ritualistic reform, was filled by the temple that became the privileged redistribution center in an expanding world of agriculture. Although temple texts, such as Mahātmyas and Sthalapurāṇas, are wont to invoke the notion of Vedic sacrifice and may claim to reproduce the layout of its enclosure, their function (food and gift as against burnt oblation) as well as their respective origins (palace and sacred mountain as against fire-house-cum-laager) are too far apart even to allow for an approximate mutual fit.<sup>27</sup> It does, however, show the lasting influence of Vedic sacrifice.

More important than such percolating notions, though far from rare or isolated, and even more important than the ritual itself, was the pattern

of discursive thought developed by the Vedic ritualists in taking apart and reworking the inherited institution of sacrifice. The *brahman* that was at stake in the verbal contest was not abstract objective truth but the intensely personal, subjective truth of one's paradoxical formulation. The *bandhu*, the inner connection contained in the *brahman* formulation, remained unspoken. When the victorious contender declares at the conclusion of the *brahmodya*: "[I] this [speaker of] *brahman* is the highest extension of speech," he asserts himself as the nexus of the life-and-death antithesis enacted in the contest but gives no explanation. This, we saw, the ritualists changed. The *bandhu* became the explicit explanation not of complementary oppositions but of identification. Or it was dissolved, truth and non-truth, being and nonbeing, life and death were no longer bound up in the mutual relations of the contest. Instead they were freed and made absolute. We have seen how the ritualists attempted to avoid the consequences by declaring certain acts to mean doing something (such as running a chariot race) and at the same time not doing it. But in the end they had to acknowledge contradiction. A statement had to be either true or false. The rules of the contest gave way to the rules of abstract proof. Doctrine was born. The winning contender's self-assertion as the true *brahman* was transformed into the Upaniṣadic *ātman-brahman* doctrine.

This was not the only doctrine, nor could it be. Once "truth" was set free from one's personal identity and made absolute, there were bound to be doctrinal splits, as between acceptance and rejection of the *ātman-brahman* doctrine (and between its various versions). Yet it was systematic ritualist thought that had set the pattern, devised the terms of inquiry, and gave it objective rules. Indian linguistic science, originating in ritualism and showing the birthmark of its origin, is a well-known case in point. More generally, whether one accepts or rejects the *ātman*, or even the authority of the *śruti*, the case is argued in the same terms and according to the same rules. In short, Indian thought was born out of the spirit of ritualism.

The decisive point was the split between the sacral world of agonistic sacrifice and the transcendence of the rule of ritual. Ritualism had "extracted the *brahman* from the middle of the *brahman*,"<sup>28</sup> as the Atharvaveda says of the mythic seer Vena. But now the *brahman* was once and for all set apart from the sacrificial contest where, hidden in its antithetical relations, it had held together the contenders. The contest had lost its inner unity and legitimacy, for the *brahman* was no longer in it. The world of agonistic sacrifice was definitely broken.

The fulcrum of ritualism was the individual single sacrificer, in whom the sacrificing master of the house was fused with his challenger, the consecrated warrior. Like his mythic prototype Prajāpati, who had in the final contest incorporated in himself his rival, Death, the single sacrificer had internalized, as we already noted, his own death. Death is his own Self.<sup>29</sup>

However there is a reverse side. He must still fight the contest but now within himself. In a closely related passage that identifies “this man in the right eye” with “that man in yonder orb [of the sun]” we are told that this man is Death. “When he who knows departs this world, he passes into that body [he has construed through the ritual] and becomes immortal, for Death is his Self.”<sup>30</sup> For all the immortality held out to him he still must die. The price of immortality is death.<sup>31</sup>

Precariously perched between the world of life and death and the immortality of transcendence man may renounce the world and seek access to the transcendent. Or he may stay in the world and transfer his predicament to the godhead in exclusive devotion and without thought of self. But in the last resort man stands alone in the middle of the irreparable breach. This is the conundrum that Vedic ritualism poses to man. It offers man its knowledge, not to solve but to live his predicament by his own efforts. Its last word is that man is himself the nexus of the irreducible contradiction.

## A b b r e v i a t i o n s

*Translations have been indicated where available*

Ait. Br.	<i>Aitareya Brāhmaṇa</i> (English trans. A. B. Keith, <i>The Rigveda Brāhmaṇas</i> , <i>Harvard Oriental Series</i> no. 25; reprint Delhi, 1971).
ĀpGS.	Āpastamba Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. H. Oldenberg, <i>The Gṛhya Sūtras</i> , <i>Sacred Books of the East</i> nos. 29, 30; reprint Delhi, 1964–65).
ĀpŚS.	Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra (German trans. W. Caland, 3 vols: vol 1, Göttingen-Leipzig, 1921; vols. 2 and 3, Amsterdam, 1924, 1928; reprint Wiesbaden, 1969).
ĀśvGS.	Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. as ĀpGS).
ĀśvŚS.	Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra.
Atharva- veda Saṃh.	Atharvaveda Saṃhitā (English trans. W. D. Whitney, 2 vols, <i>Harvard Oriental Series</i> nos. 7, 8; reprint Delhi, 1962).
Atharva- veda Par.	Atharvaveda Pariśiṣṭa (Partial German trans. D. J. Kohlbrugge, <i>Über Omina</i> , Wageningen, 1938; part. English trans. L. van den Bosch, chaps. 21–29, Groningen, 1978).
BaudhGS.	Baudhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra.
BaudhŚS.	Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra.
BharŚS.	Bharadvāja Śrauta Sūtra (ed. and trans. C. G. Kashikar, Poona, 1964).
Bṛhad Ār. Up.	Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (English trans. R. E. Hume, <i>The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads</i> , Oxford, 1934).
Chānd. Up.	Chāndogya Upaniṣad (English trans. as Bṛhad Ār. Up.).
DrāhŚS.	Drāhyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (partial trans. A. Parpola, Helsinki, 1968–69).
Gautama.	Gautama Dharmasūtra (English trans. G. Bühler, <i>Sacred Books of the East</i> no. 2; reprint Delhi 1965).
GobhGS.	Gobhila Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. as ĀpGS).
Gop.	Br. Gopatha Brāhmaṇa.
HirGS.	Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. as ĀpGS).
HirŚS.	Hiraṇyakeśin Śrauta Sūtra.

- Jaim. Br. Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa (partial ed. and trans. W. Caland, *Das Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa in Auswahl*, Amsterdam, 1919; H. W. Bodewitz, *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 1.1–65*, Leiden, 1973).
- JUp. Br. Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (ed. and trans. H. Oertel, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 16, 1986).
- KāthGS. Kāthaka Gṛhya Sūtra.
- Kāth. Kāthaka Saṃhitā.
- Samh. Saṃhitā.
- KātyŚS. Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (English trans. H. G. and R. H. Ranade, Poona, n.y.).
- KauśS. Kauśika Sūtra (part. German trans. W. Caland, *Altindisches Zauberritual*, Amsterdam, 1900).
- Kauṣ. Br. Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa (English trans., see Ait. Br.).
- KhādGS. Khādira Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans., see ĀpGS).
- LāṭyŚS. Lāṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra (partial trans., see DrāhyŚS.).
- Maitr. Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā.
- Samh. Saṃhitā.
- MānGS. Mānava Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. M. J. Dresden, Groningen, 1941).
- MānŚS. Mānava Śrauta Sūtra (ed. and trans. M. J. van Gelder, New Delhi, 1963).
- Manu. Mānava Dharma Śāstra (English trans. G. Bühler, *Sacred Books of the East* 25; reprint New York, 1963; W. Doniger, *The Laws of Manu*, Harmondsworth, 1991).
- Pañc. Br. Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (English trans. W. Caland, *Bibliotheca Indica* 255, Calcutta, 1931).
- PārGS. Pāraskara Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans., see ĀpGS).
- Ṛgveda. Ṛgveda Saṃhitā (German trans. K. F. Geldner, *Harvard Oriental Series* nos. 33–36).
- Ṣaḍv. Br. Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (English trans. W. B. Bollée, Utrecht, 1956).
- ŚāṅkhGS. Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. W. Caland, Nagpur, 1953; reprint Delhi, 1980).
- ŚāṅkhŚS. Śāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra (English trans. as ĀpGS.).
- Śat. Br. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (English trans. J. Eggeling, 5 vols, *Sacred Books of the East* nos. 12, 26, 41, 43, 44; reprint Delhi, 1963).
- Taitt. Br. Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (partial English trans. P. E. Dumont, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* nos. 92, 95, 98, 101, 107, 108, 109, 113).

Taitt. Saṃh.	Taittirīya Saṃhitā (English trans. A. B. Keith, 2 vols, <i>The Veda of the Black Yajus School</i> , <i>Harvard Oriental Series</i> nos. 18 and 19; reprint Delhi, 1967).
VādhS.	Vādhūla Sūtra (partial ed. and German trans. W. Caland, <i>Acta Orientalia</i> 1 (1923), 2 (1924), 4 (1926), 6 (1928); M. Sparreboom and J. C. Heesterman, <i>The Ritual of Setting Up the Sacrificial Fires According to the Vādhūla School</i> , Vienna, 1989).
VaikhGS.	Vaikhānasa Gṛhya Sūtra (English trans. W. Caland, <i>Vaikhānasasmārtasūtram</i> , <i>Bibliotheca Indica</i> , 251, Calcutta, 1929)
VaikhŚS.	Vaikhānasa Śrauta Sūtra.
Vait S.	Vaitāna Sūtra (German trans. by W. Caland, <i>Das Vaitāna Sūtra des Atharvaveda</i> , Amsterdam 1910; reprint Wiesbaden 1968).
Vāj. Saṃh.	Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā
VārGS.	Vārāha Gṛhya Sūtra (French trans. P. Rolland, Aix-en-Provence, 1971).
VārŚS.	Vārāha Śrauta Sūtra.
Viṣṇu Smṛti	(English trans. J. Jolly, <i>Sacred Books of the East</i> 7; reprint Delhi, 1965).





## Notes

### Introduction

1. See, e.g., the inconclusive discussions in the symposium edited by R. H. Hamerton-Kelly, *Violent Origins* (Stanford, Calif., 1987), esp. pp. 177–88.

2. Mānava Dharma Śāstra (hereafter Manu) 1:85–86.

3. See F. Staal, *Rules without Meaning*, Toronto Studies in Religion no. 4 (New York, 1989), 131–40.

4. On this term of A. Minard, see his *Trois énigmes sur les cent chemins* (Paris, 1949), 155.

5. See Staal, *Rules* (n. 3 above), 178–82, and F. Staal, *Jouer avec le feu* (Paris, 1989), 66. See also chap. 2.4 below. Sometimes the ritualists' drive to force explicit structural rules on the inherited materials has distinctly odd results (see, e.g., chap. 2.5 and chap. 2, n. 86 below).

6. W. Kaelber, *Tapta-Mārga: Ascetism and Initiation in Vedic India* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), 105, asks a similar question. Referring to Staal's view of ritual as a closed, unchanging, "meaningless" structure with no symbolic "significance," Kaelber apologetically asks: "How are we to understand its *relationship* to any Vedic institution characterized by change, usefulness and meaning?" The answer—not Staal's, but mine—is to be found in sacrifice, the central Vedic institution. It was sacrifice that was changed—not by an "organic" process of accretion or erosion but purposely and fundamentally, as I will argue. This in turn brought about the Vedic ritual known to us as a closed, unchanging, and meaningless structure, a separate realm cut off from the lived-in world. Here we may also find the reason for its unchanged preservation. Clearly the purely synchronic approach propounded by Staal can hardly take this into account.

7. I refer to J. Huizinga's view of the ludic aspect of culture. See sec. 1.7 and chap. 1, n. 90 below.

8. See F. Le Roux and C. J. Guyonvarc'h, *Les druides*, 3d ed. (Rennes, 1982), 103–7. The resemblance with archaic traits in ancient India might have come out better if the authors had not equated the later classical brahmin with his archaic predecessor. On the brahmin and his origins, see chaps. 6 and 7 below.

9. See sec. 2.3.

10. Staal seems to waver between timeless, atavistic patterns of ritualization, which may or may not reemerge but are always unchanged, and the innovative construction of the ritualists. Of course, he acknowledges that there will have been "development or evolution" but appears to limit this mainly to the "accretion of meaning," which implies that the ritual itself remained untouched (*Rules without Meaning*, 137, 140). In other words ritual is held to be immune from "history," irrespective of the endeavors of the ancient Indian ritualists; see n. 6 above.

11. See Staal, *Rules without Meaning*, 385. For Weber's concept of formal rationality see *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1, chap. 2, par. 9.

12. See L. Renou, "Les connexions entre le rituel et la grammaire en Sanskrit," *Journal asiatique* 233 (1941–42): 105–65. On the difference see Renou "Sur le genre du Sūtra," *Journal asiatique* (1963): 165–216, esp. 178.

13. Bandhāyana Śrauta Sūtra (hereafter BaudhŚS.) 24.2: 186.5.

14. Thus we notice a plethora of priestly functions but no unified priesthood. For nonbrahmins as priests see, e.g., M. Marriott, ed., *Village India*, 9th ed. (Chicago, 1972), 5.

15. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 95–107.

16. F. Le Roux and C. J. Guyonvarc'h, *Les druides* (n. 8 above), 103, n. 114.

### Chapter One

1. J. Z. Smith "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in *Violent Origins*, ed. R. G. Hamerton (Stanford, Calif., 1987), 179.

2. Ibid., 202–5.

3. J. Z. Smith, "The Bare Facts of Ritual," in his *Imagining Religion* (Chicago, 1982), 53–65. Possibly what Professor Smith means to say is that "sacrifice" is, in his opinion, too imprecise a term to be of much if any use.

4. M. Detienne, "Culinary Practices and the Spirit of Sacrifice," in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, ed. M. Detienne and J.-P. Vernant (Chicago, 1989), 20.

5. Ibid., 21. One is reminded of the Indian dharmaśāstra that equally holds that meat is only allowed in the context of sacrifice (Manu 5.31.).

6. The view of sacrifice, eloquently dismissed by Detienne, received its classical formulation in H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W. D. Halls (Chicago, 1964), chap. 5, esp. 93. It still repays reading, as Detienne would agree.

7. R. Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris 1972); W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berlin, 1972). For an analytical summary of the views of both authors see B. Mack's introduction in R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins* (n. 1.).

8. W. Burkert, "The Problem of Ritual Killing," in *Violent Origins*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, 173; similarly, see Girard, *La violence et le sacré*, 9.

9. Burkert, "Ritual Killing," 171.

10. A. E. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult bei den Naturvölkern* (Wiesbaden, 1951), 200–218.

11. This *Urzeit-Vorgang* returns in a different form with Burkert and Girard, both of whom hold on to an "original scene" of necessary violence founding human society, which then recalls Freud's "primal scene" (see Hamerton-Kelly, *Violent Origins*, 18, 163).

12. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult*, 209.

13. Nevertheless Jensen is, in this respect at least, perfectly in line with Mauss, who sees the starting point of the evolution that led to the sacrifice of god in the

agrarian sacrifices as analyzed by Mannhardt and Frazer; see Hubert and Mauss, *Sacrifice* (n. 6), 77.

14. The distinction would mean that, e.g., the *pesach* lamb—wholly eaten without an offering being made—would be excluded from the bounds of sacrifice as a “ritual killing.” It is, however, explicitly called a sacrifice, *zebach* (Ex 12.27; Dt 16.2, 5–6). The use of the term may be relatively late (postexilic) and could therefore represent a looser, more generalized meaning. But it is still significant that no distinction is made (see also sec. 1.2 below). The same would go for the Athenian Buphonia or “ox slaying”; see R. K. Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (New York, 1952), 68–74; Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983), 136–43.

15. Hamerton-Kelly, *Violent Origins* (n. 1), 180.

16. For the vegetal sacrifice, see A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondopfer* (Jena, 1880); animal sacrifice, J. Schwab, *Das altindische Thieropfer* (Erlangen, 1886); soma, W. Caland and V. Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1906–07). The simplest form of *śrauta* sacrifice, the twice-daily milk offering, has been exhaustively dealt with by P. E. Dumont, *L’Agnihotra* (Baltimore 1939); the same author has also translated the texts on the horse sacrifice (*L’Aśvamedha* [Paris, 1927]).

17. Marcel Mauss, “Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice,” in *Oeuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris 1968–69), 193–307 (first published in *Année Sociologique* 2 (1898), 29–138). For English translation, see n. 6 above.

18. See, e.g., V. Valeri, *Kingship and Sacrifice: Ritual and Society in Ancient Hawaii* (Chicago, 1985), 69, who argues that in general (and especially by Girard) too exclusive an emphasis is put on the violent act of killing, which he thinks is irrelevant in the case of vegetal offerings simply left on the altar to decompose.

19. Taitt.Samh. 6.6.9.2; Śat.Br. 2.2.2.1–2; 4.3.4.1–2; 11.1.2.1.

20. Cf. Śat.Br. 13.6.2.13; Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra (hereafter ĀpŚS.) 20.24.11. It may be noted that man as a victim is dealt with in the same way as the non-*paśu* wild animals. Apparently man, though a *paśu*, forms a link with the nondomesticated wild. The *puruṣamedha*, like the *aśvamedha*, brings both spheres together to mark more strongly their separation. Man, however, has his being in both worlds. See also sec. 1.8 below.

21. These practices are not unknown in Vedic ritual. Thus the rice balls (*pinḍa*) for the fathers are placed on the ground in a furrow. Generally the *bali* offerings in the domestic ritual are put on the ground. Similarly, as Hertha Krick has already pointed out, the *vedi*, the shallow trapezoid dugout between the *gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya* fires appears to combine the characteristics of an altar where the offerings are exposed and of a seat, covered with strewn grass, for the guests of the sacrificial meal (H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* [Vienna, 1982] 111). As regards offerings made in the water, i.e., the final bath at the end of the soma ritual, see the *avabhr̥tha-istī* (Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* [Paris, 1906–7] nr. 254 d.). An offering of cakes to ward off Rudra, the god of the wilderness, is hung on a tree or put on a tree stump (after a burnt offering at a crossroad; cf. ĀpŚS.8.18.9 and E. Arbman, *Rudra* [Uppsala, 1922], 57).

22. Although the festive meal has been all but eliminated from the ritual, we still have a rather rowdy scene in the *vājapeya*. The participants in the chariot race—a distinctive feature of the *vājapeya*—are given the parts of a cow (immolated in honor of the Maruts) that are not to be used for the burnt offering or consumption by the officiants. The chariot racers (*vājasṛt*) fight over the pieces that they tear from each other's hands (*vimātham kurvate*; Taitt.Br. 1.3.8.4; on *vi-math-*, see J. Narten, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4 (1960), 121–35); cf. ĀpŚS. 18.7.8. On the sacrificial meal see chap. 7 below.

23. On the *pesach* lamb, see Yerkes, *Sacrifice* (n. 14), 82–87.

24. See n. 14 above.

25. For a case in point see M. Bloch, *From Blessing to Violence* (Cambridge, 1984) 59. Preceding the actual ceremony—a circumcision—there is the killing of a bull whose meat will be eaten during the ceremony. The author hesitates, however, to call this killing a sacrifice since—as he argues—“it is not directly connected to the main purpose of the ritual.” But such a direct connection does not seem to be necessary for a sacrifice to be integrated into another ceremony. Incidentally, it is to be noted that the author's hesitation is not based on the lack of an offering to the gods—which in Jensen's view would bar this “ritual killing” from being called “sacrifice”—but on the lack of a direct connection to the ceremony's purpose. Apparently, the notion of sacrifice is still surrounded by considerable confusion.

26. See Yerkes, *Sacrifice*, 74–79, esp. 74.

27. J. van Baal, “Offering, Sacrifice and Gift,” *Numen* 23 (1976), 161–78, esp. 178.

28. *Ibid.*, 161.

29. Śat.Br. 5.3.5.17.

30. *Ibid.*, 7.4.2.22.

31. J.-P. Vernant, “Le sacrifice, le mythe grec,” in *Dictionnaire des mythologies* (Paris 1981) 2:409.

32. See U. A. Cedzich, *Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen* (Ph.D. diss., Julius-Maximilians Universität, Würzburg, 46). I am indebted to the author for further information and discussion.

33. P. Arndt, *Religion auf Ost-Flores* (Vienna, 1951), 2, 18, 106, quoted by van Baal, “Offering, Sacrifice and Gift” (n. 27), 169, and J. van Baal *Man's Quest for Partnership* (Assen, 1981), 222.

34. *Manu* 1.86.

35. See M. Biarreau and Ch. Malamoud, *Le sacrifice dans l'Inde ancienne* (Paris, 1976), 14–18. The verse is Rgveda 10.90.16 concluding the so-called Puruṣa hymn; it also occurs in the riddle hymn 1.164.50.

36. Jensen, *Mythos und Kult* (n. 10), 201.

37. *Ibid.*, 208, 213.

38. K. Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühl* (Basel, 1946), 185–288. Jensen (*Mythos und Kult*, 209) records his agreement, especially as regards the rejection of the gift theory as an explanation of ritual killing and meal.

39. Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” 214; see also 197, 223, 261.

40. Ibid., 282. Incidentally, the animal fat added to the bones will have been a pragmatic measure of fire tending—as it is in the Iranian fire cult—rather than a delectable morsel for the gods. In fact, as Hesiod tells the story, it contributed to call forth the ire of Zeus. The wish to restore the victim and make it whole again is also evinced in Vedic sacrifice. The bones and skull hardly receive any attention, but all the parts of the cut-up animal are placed on the *vedi* and touched by the sacrificer. “Slayed and killed is the animal that has arrived in yonder world; by touching [its parts] all together he restores it” (cf. *ĀpŚS.* 7.25.6; *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhita* [hereafter *Maitr.Saṃh.*] 3.10.4:134.10). On this occasion the head, the spinal column and the hind legs are specifically mentioned among the parts placed on the *vedi* (in the three pots that contain the meat not used in the sacrifice) but neither before nor after do we hear anymore about them. Possibly their mention is a remnant of older but superseded sacrificial practices (esp. the head or skull can be shown to have had a significant, even central, role; cf. J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* [Chicago, 1985], chap. 3).

41. Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” 189, 196.

42. Ibid., 201–11.

43. It might be argued that the Olympian sacrifice does not involve destruction. The skull and long bones, though calcined, are not reduced to ashes by the fire. But at all events the burned bones are withdrawn from use.

44. Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” 196, refers to the *theoxenia* where the gods are invited to the festive commensality with their human hosts, as they regularly are in Vedic sacrifice.

45. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), 63.

46. Ibid., 202.

47. Ibid. Possibly we may see here a parallel to Vedic developments in which the opposition of *devas* and *asuras* is hardened and standardized only in the *brāhmaṇa* texts.

48. Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” 217–19.

49. In the *śrauta* first-fruits sacrifice (*āgrayaṇeṣṭi*) the cake to heaven and earth is offered whole in the fire (*sarvahuta*); see *ĀpŚS.* 6.30.1.

50. W. Burkert, *Structure and Change in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Calif., 1979), 52.

51. Ibid., 53.

52. P. Stengel, in *Pauly's Realencyclopädie der Klassischen Altertumwissenschaft*, (Stuttgart, 1894 [repr. 1958]), 1:2, col. 2667, explains *aparchē* as “die Erstlingsgabe, die Weihgabe (*primitiae*), die vom Opfer für die Götter abgesondert wird, ehe der Mensch sich anschickt davon zu genießen.”

53. See M. Biarreau, *Théorie de la connaissance et philosophie de la parole* (Paris and The Hague, 1964), 87.

54. The holocaust sacrifice would then maximize abandonment and self-abnegation not just by the sacrificer but by the whole group of possible beneficiaries and therefore would require an ostensibly unbroken communal unison. The same

would go for the other extreme, where everything is consumed (on the spot) without any part being abandoned, such as the *pesach* lamb or the Greek Buphonia. In that case there would be no occasion for the sacrificer to show his exemplary self-abnegation, the whole community acting in unison as sacrificer (but for the butcher—or his axe—in the Buphonia, who is chased and consequently does not receive anything). This may explain that both extremes, where there is not even the pretense of any offering to the gods, are still considered to be “sacrifices” (*zebach, thusia*).

55. U. A. Cedzich, *Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister* (n. 32), 78, and generally the discussion of the incense burner, pp. 70–80. See also K. M. Schipper, “Taoism: the Liturgical Tradition,” (Ier Congrès d’études taoïstes, Bellagio, 1968, typescript), 33–35.

56. Cf. K. Meuli’s mention of the custom of Siberian hunters, who “purify” themselves by fumigation before going out on a hunt. The practical aim, though, is to mislead the animal’s sense of smell; see Meuli, “Griechische Opferbräuche,” (n. 39), 226.

57. Schipper, “Taoism,” 34.

58. See J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), 230, 320. Probably it was for this purpose that the Persian king Darius exacted a yearly tribute of a thousand-talents worth of frankincense from Arabia, as Herodotus (3.93) tells us.

59. See Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and in Early Judaism* (n. 14), 92 and 225, n. 3. On *thumos* see also R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought* (Cambridge, 1951), 44–46.

60. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 103, 213, n. 77. On the *prāṇāgnihotra* see also sec. 7.9 below.

61. See n. 29 above.

62. See ĀpŚS. 5.16.4. For making the fire wax by putting (dry) herbs on it see also Ṛgveda 3.5.8; 5.8.7; 7.8.2 (see A. Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie*, 1:98). Typically, however, nothing is said about fragrance, the ritual motive being *śānti*, the elimination of dangers coming from the fire. Possible olfactive satisfaction for gods or men is disregarded in favor of the sole motive of *śānti*.

63. For Agni as the herald see, e.g., Kauṣ.Br. 30.6. Agni is requested to bring the gods (*devātānām āvāhana*); see Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (n. 16), 84. For the gods as guests, see also sec. 1.3 above.

64. See J. Goudsblom, “The Domestication of Fire as a Civilizing Process,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 4 (1987), 457–76, esp. 461–63. Perhaps the ancient Greek festival of Artemis Laphria in which animals were chased into a sacrificial bonfire contains a reminiscence of the use of bushfire. Even if this festival is an innovative elaboration dating from imperial Roman times, it is unlikely to have been invented at that time. (See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* [n. 45], 62). The Greek Laphria festival has a parallel in the Indian epic myth of the “Burning of the Khāṇḍava Forest”; Agni requires that the creatures living in the forest are barred from fleeing (see A. Hiltebeitel, “The Burning of the Forest Myth,” in *Hinduism: New Essays in the History of Religion*, ed. B. L. Smith [Leiden, 1976], 208–24). Cf. also n. 117, below.

65. See ĀpŚS. 1.25.3–12; A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer*, 42. Perhaps we should also think here of a curious rite of prognostication (Taitt.Saṃh. 3.3.8.4; ĀpŚS. 13.24.18; BaudhŚS. 14.13:175.4). Early in the morning on the *aṣṭakā* day “dividing the days” (*vidhānyām ekāṣṭakāyām*)—i.e., the New Year’s Day—one goes with a cake made of four measures of grain (*apūpa catuṣṣa-rāva*) to a bush or thicket and tries to fire it with a cake. “If it burns it will be a good year, if not a bad year.” It is hard to see how a cake, even if still hot from the oven, could fire a thicket, unless of course it is itself burning. This appears indeed to be the idea, for Baudhāyana has the cake fired first with the help of a burning coal. Nevertheless firing the bush with a burning or smoldering cake is a strangely round-about procedure. One wonders whether the original idea was not the other way around: using a bush fire to bake one’s cake in hopes that it may come out all right, neither half-baked nor completely burnt (cf. the similar concern about the standard sacrificial *puroḍāśa*: if burnt it belongs to Nirṛti, Misfortune, if underbaked it belongs to the equally dreaded Rudra; Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.3.4.). At any rate this would provide for a means of prognostication as good as or rather better than the odd procedure of firing the bush with a cake. But, whatever the case may be, lighting a bushfire appears to have been part of the *aṣṭakā* celebration. Some manuals of the domestic or *gṛhya* ritual even give it as an alternative to the sacrifice marking the new year: “or he may optionally burn down brushwood in the forest and say: ‘This is my Aṣṭakā’” (ĀśvGS. 2.4.9; ŚākhGS. 3.14.5; GobhGS. 4.1.21). It does not seem implausible that the original idea may have been to avail oneself of this bushfire to bake one’s festive cakes, with or without prognostication. But mostly this way of celebrating the *aṣṭakā* would seem to be the solemn start of the slash-and-burn season of shifting cultivators.

66. See K. Schipper, *Le corps taoïste* (Paris, 1982), 122. For a Vedic example I refer to the burning of the grass strewn on the place of sacrifice. Demonstrably a matter of disposal, it was remolded into a proper burnt oblation (see sec. 2.5).

Curiously, I witnessed with H.-P. Schmidt how the sacrificial hearth was inadvertently reconverted again into a disposal fire. In an attempt to publicize and revive the practice of the Vedic ritual—an interesting modern phenomenon that has gained some popularity—a group of brahmins from Maharashtra performed a *vā-japeya*. Being staunch vegetarians the brahmins were embarrassed by the considerable amount of meat left over (that should have been consumed in a big brahmin-feeding feast). So there was nothing left to do but throw the substantial remainder into the sacrificial fire without the benefit of mantras.

Disposal by burning may perhaps be recognized in the background of the regular offering to Agni *svistakṛt*. This oblation, which concludes the main part of the sacrifice, is qualified as the *vāstu*, the remainder, while Agni in this case is regularly identified with Rudra, the god of the wild and of the untamed fire, who is then kept off by satisfying him with the remainder (cf. Śat.Br. 1.7.1.1.7; Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.6.5). See also n. 89 below on cremation as both sacrifice and disposal.

67. Modi, *Religious Ceremonies* (n. 58), 230.

68. Schipper, *Le corps taoïste*, 36.

69. As an exception the use made of ashes that are mixed with the clay for the fired bricks of the special brick-built altar (normally the fire altar is a small earth mound) should be mentioned; see sec. 4.2 and chap. 4, n. 29 below. Otherwise the



excess ashes, specifically those in the pot in which the fire is carried in the year preceding the construction of the brick altar, are committed to the waters (see ĀpŚS. 16.12.11). The accompanying mantras stress the fire's regeneration, which suggests a circuit linking fire and water and neatly ties in with the ashes' use in making the bricks. But the ashes used for the bricks are, of course, not the same as those thrown in the water, and the basic act is one of simple disposal.

70. On the question of Zoroastrian sacrifice, see sec. 2.10 below, and the authorities quoted there.

71. Smith, "The Domestication of Sacrifice," in *Violent Origins*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly (n. 1), 200. On domestication and its impact on the development of sacrifice see sec. 1.8 below. This has even led to the theory that the original motive for domestication of bovines was to provide victims for sacrifice (E. Isaac, "On the Domestication of Cattle," *Science* 137 (1962), 195–204; Isaac, "Mythes, cultes et élevage," *Diogenes* 1963, 72–95, which follows up a suggestion of E. Hahn, *Die Entstehung der Pflugkultur* [Heidelberg, 1909]). Although the view of "religious reasons" as a last-resort solution to an otherwise intractable problem starts from a rather crude view of "religion," the theory deserves attention. The point is that the effort needed to catch and domesticate the wild and fairly gigantic urus—the ancestor of the domesticated bovine—can hardly be explained by purely economic or dietary motives. See also nn. 141–42 below.

72. J. Z. Smith, in an appendix to his paper in the Hamerton-Kelly symposium ("A Note on the Primitivity of Animal Sacrifice" in *Violent Origins*, ed. R. G. Hamerton-Kelly [Stanford, Calif., 1987], 202–5) has strongly argued against animal sacrifice arising before or outside domestication. The sacrificial complex of killing, destruction, and feast is, however, equally conceivable, though its existence is hard to prove, among Palaeolithic hunters, where Burkert, following Meuli, looks for its origins. The Vedic ritual texts have some striking references to hunting. Thus the *prasarpaṇa*, the "creeping up" to the place where the first "laud" in the morning round of the soma sacrifice is to be chanted, is described as the stooped gait of hunters sneaking up on a deer to surprise and catch it. The interesting point is that here the deer to be caught (and killed) is the sacrifice. See Pañc.Br. 6.7.10 (cf. ĀpŚS. 12.17.3–4). See also Ṛgveda 10.51.6, where Agni's flight is compared to the *gāyāl* buffalo's running away from the (clanging) bowstring of the hunter. See further H. Falk, *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel* (Freiburg, 1986), 34; S. Migron, "Rgvedic *van*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 22 (1980), 269–82. Also W. D. O'Flaherty, *Other People's Myths* (New York, 1988), chap. 4.

73. See, e.g., Taitt.Samh. 1.5.7.3; 1.7.4.4; for "yoking the fire" see also the mantra in 1.6.2d: "I yoke thee with the divine *brahman* to bear this oblation, o Jātavedas; kindling thee, may we live long with good offspring, with good men, bearing thee tribute" (said by the sacrificer when the *adhvaryu* officiant puts the "encircling sticks," the *paridhis*, on three sides of the oblatinal fire; see ĀpŚS. 4.6.4).

74. See, e.g., Taitt.Samh. 5.7.26; Vāj.Samh. 23.7; Śat.Br. 6.3.1.22. In this way the act of adding newly churned fire to the already burning oblatinal fire (as prescribed in the animal sacrifice, when the oblatinal fire has been brought forward to its stand, the *uttaravedi*, on the extended place of sacrifice) is viewed as sacrificing the fire as a victim (see ĀpŚS. 7.13.5–7; Taitt.Samh. 6.3.5.1; Śat.Br. 3.7.3.4–6;

Ait.Br. 1.15.6). The notion of the fire as sacrificial victim seems also to be implied in the R̥gveda: “They lead him forward with the mighty rope” (4.1.9). See also sec. 4.8 and chap. 4, n. 123.

75. Śat.Br. 6.3.1.22.

76. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.11:103.5. M. Nihom has led me to observe that there might be a connection with the marriage fire conveyed from the bride’s home to the new home of the married couple, “followed” by the cattle of the dowry (on the domestic fire being obtained from the bride’s home, see J. C. Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” in *Agni*, ed. J. F. Staal [Berkeley, Calif., 1982], 2:79).

77. Śat.Br. 4.3.4.11.

78. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.6.1–2; 6.2.8.4–6; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.8.6; Kāṭh.Saṃh. 25.7; Śat.Br. 1.2.3.1; 1.3.3.13–17; cf. R̥gveda 10.51. See also Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 40), 77.

79. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.10, a,b; ĀpŚS. 6.24.7, 26.4, cf. 11.1.13, 18.3.

80. Śat.Br. 2.3.3.1–6.

81. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.8–10 explicitly equates the fire with the *ātman*. See also Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” 76–79.

82. Śat.Br. 11.7.1.2; cf. ĀpŚS. 7.28.6–8.

83. Śat.Br. 3.1.2.14–17.

84. See sec. 1.9 below on the rivalry between the Āditiyas and the Aṅgirasas.

85. Interestingly, Burkert, *Homo Necans* (n. 7), 48, argues for the identity in form and function of sacrificial and funerary burning. In that connection he insists on the importance of the banquet in both cases. Although there is an obvious difference between the holocaust offering accompanying the cremation on the one hand and the animal victim sacrificed and consumed on the other hand, the similarity of the *anustaraṇī*’s (see n. 88 below) and the *upavasathagavī*’s function (i.e., the cow that provides the funerary meal of the *gopitryajña*; see n. 89 below) suggests that sacrifice and cremation are indeed fundamentally connected with each other. The Indian case, then, is not unique except insofar as it explicitly states what in the Greek case can only be surmised. See also n. 143 below for a similar connection of sacrificial and funerary meal.

86. Cf. H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* (Vienna, 1982), 48; Ch. Malamoud, “Cuire le monde,” *Puruṣārtha* 1: pp. 91–135; esp. pp. 108–13; Malamoud, “Les morts sans visage,” in *La mort, les morts dans les sociétés anciennes*, ed. G. Gnoli and J.-P. Vernant (Cambridge, 1982), 441–53.

87. The soma juice is, of course, not boiled but offered “raw” in the oblatinal fire. But this “King Soma,” having been killed by the pressing stones, is equally a corpse. This, it would seem, is the enigmatic “truth” behind the mantra of the officiants at the king’s consecration: “So-and-so is your king, Soma is our, the brahmins’ king.” (see J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, [The Hague, 1957], 71, 116; The King’s Order, *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 20, n.s. [1986]:3.)

88. R. Geib, “*Agni Kravyād* das Fleisch fressende Feuer im R̥g- und Atharva-veda,” *Kuhn’s Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachwissenschaft* 89 (1976): 198–220,

points out that it is not perfectly clear whether *kravya* refers to the body of the deceased. It might, as he argues, refer to the goat or cow (*anustaraṇī*) burned with the body. The lack of clarity may be an intentional ambiguity on the part of the commentators. From the point of view of the ritual there can be no doubt, however, about the cremation's character as a holocaust sacrifice, even though the *anustaraṇī* cow covering the corpse would keep it from being completely incinerated.

89. The destruction aspect is made clear by a mantra addressed to the ancestors: "The member that the cremation fire has burned . . . that I restore to you" BaudhŚS. 2.10:49.11). This mantra refers here to the cow sacrifice (*upavasatha-gavi*) that according to Baudhayana immediately precedes the rites for setting up the *śrauta* fires (*agnyādheya*); see Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung*, 78, who points to the connection with the funerary rites (cf. W. Caland, *Ahnenkult* 27). The cow sacrifice is intended to restore the charred body of the deceased. In that sense it seems to be akin to the *anustaraṇī* cow burned together with the corpse (see nn. 85, 88). Generally speaking, destruction by fire is here clearly linked to disposal by burning; see above, n. 66, and Malamoud, "Les morts sans visage" (n. 86).

90. I refer to the concept of play—the ludic aspect of culture—as elaborated by J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (London, 1949), 1–28.

91. Cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.9:30.12 (*kuruta*, "make," instead of *hata*, "kill"). On the use of a verb meaning "to make, to do" for sacrificing, see J. Casabona, *Recherches sur le vocabulaire des sacrifices en grec*, *Publications des Annales de la faculté des lettres et sciences humaines d'Aix* no. 56 n.s. (Aix-en-Provence, 1966), 301–4. The author shows that this usage is not a substitution for a specifically religious term; nor is it to be viewed as a euphemism. See also sec. 1.8 below.

92. On the dangers involved in receiving the sacrificer's food and gifts see J. C. Heesterman, "Reflections on the *dakṣiṇā*," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 (1959): 243, and "Vrātya and Sacrifice," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1962), 25.

93. See, e.g., Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.6.7.

94. See ĀpŚS. 5.29.12; BaudhŚS.3.3:72.1; see also Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 40), 77–79.

95. Thus Indra, e.g., disturbs Tvaṣṭr's sacrifice, from which he had been excluded for killing Tvaṣṭr's son (in itself a sacrificial episode), and takes hold of the soma beverage (see n. 145 below). Elsewhere Rudra, equally excluded, "pierces" the god's sacrifice with an arrow (Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.8.3). In epic and purāṇic mythology this latter theme is elaborated into Śiva destroying Dakṣa's sacrifice; see W. Doniger O'Flaherty, *Hindu Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1975), 118–25.

96. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 13.

97. Ibid., 3.

98. This may also provide the answer to Jensen's criticism of Huizinga's view of religious rites as essentially a "higher form" of child's play or indeed animal's play (Jensen, *Mythos und Kult* (n. 10), 66; Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 17). Jensen asks what then makes for this "higher form," what gives it its added spiritual value. Huizinga does not directly answer this question but only insists on the primacy of play as such. The answer would, however, seem to be clear: the sacrificial play deals directly with the enigma of life and death. As such it is the "highest form" of play.

99. See n. 35.

100. Ait.Br. 2.8; cf. Maitr.Saṃh 3.10.2; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa [hereafter Śat.Br.] 1.2.3.6–9. The essence finally enters the earth to become rice. So, in offering a rice cake together with the animal victim, the essence is restored to the immolated victim: “Let our sacrifice be with a victim provided with essence, let our sacrifice be with a whole victim” (Ait.Br. 2.8.7). In this way the ritualist intends to close the circle again by a paradox: a final splitting up through the cake sacrifice.

101. Cf. sec. 1.9 (end), below, and n. 147.

102. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.3:24.1–25.5. The cow named *kṣudh*, hunger, we also encounter where the asuras are said to have sent her over to the gods to confound them. However, not finding a place with them she returns to the asuras, whom she destroys by burning them (with hunger); Maitr.Saṃh. 1.10.15:154.16; Kāth.Saṃh. 36.9:76.11; Taitt.Br. 1.6.7.2).

103. The final stage is seen when one finds terraces near some Nambudiri houses that are paved with bricks that look strikingly like those used in the fire altar. We should not be too quick in judging this as an utter profanation. The point is that the play if over. Normal life, with its diffusion and confusion, takes over again. Man in his play reaches out to another world but must in the end find his way back to his own imperfect world, taking with him if nothing else the bricks of his altar.

104. Ch. Malamoud, “Village et forêt dans l'idéologie de l'Inde brahmanique,” *Archives européennes de sociologie* 17 (1976): 3–20, esp. 6–10.

105. Śat.Br. 13.2.4.3.

106. Recently H. Falk has plausibly argued for the identification of the soma plant with a variety of ephedra, which is not used as a hallucinogenic but as a drug to keep awake during the night of the soma festival. (Communication to the VII World Conference of Sanskritists, Leiden, August 1987.) The question will, of course, remain undecided, at least for some time to come.

107. Śat.Br. 1.4.1.10–16.

108. See n. 72 above.

109. On man as a *paśu*, cf. Malamoud, “Village et forêt,” 14–16.

110. See J. C. Heesterman, “Self-Sacrifice in Vedic Ritual,” *Gilgul, Essays Dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky*, ed. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden, 1987), 91–106. See sec. 6.3 below.

111. On the aspect of artificiality, cf. Smith in *Violent Origins* (n. 1), 201. It is no other than the half-believe, half-make-believe of play—“the unity and indivisibility of belief and unbelief,” the indissoluble connection between the sacred earnestness and “make-believe” or “fun” that Huizinga (*Homo Ludens*, 24) refers to.

112. See n. 91 above.

113. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.7.1. On the riddle, see the secret names of the cow, R̥gveda 7.87.4: “who knows the foot print (*pada*) should formulate [the cow's names] like secrets.”

114. See the mantra, Taitt.Saṃh. 1.2.5.c. This is the mantra for making a ghee libation on the seventh step of the soma cow, the barter price for the soma stalks (for this rite, see ĀpŚS. 10.23.2) who in this connection is also called *Idā*. Finally

the soma cow is again directly linked with the *dakṣiṇā* gift cows (see J. C. Heesterman, “Significance of the *dakṣiṇā*,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4 [1959]: 241–58, esp. 251–54).

115. Cf. Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 16), no. 256.

116. For the *adhṛigu* formula see Taitt.Br. 3.6.6; Ait.Br. 2.6.1–12.

117. This domesticated universe is bounded by the fire brand that is carried around to enclose the animal as well as the area of the sacrificial pole and the slaughterer’s fire (*paryagnikaraṇa*; see ĀpŚS. 7.15.1–4; Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.8; see also sec. 1.5 and nn. 64, 65 above). Interestingly, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa argues against this rite on the ground that the fire would not protectively enclose the sacrificial area but would immediately swallow the victim (Śat.Br. 3.8.1.8). As we have already seen, the fire is not only man’s most powerful ally in domesticating the world; it may also turn against him and revert to its undomesticated state.

118. Ait.Br. 2.6.4.

119. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.5.1.

120. Taitt.Saṃh. 3.1.5.1; 6.3.8.1.

121. I refer to the rites of carrying forward fire and soma (*agnīśomapraṇayaṇa*), setting them in their places (in the *āgnūdhrīya* and *havirdhāna* sheds, respectively), and giving up the *avāntaradikṣā*; see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 106c,e. See J. C. Heesterman, “La réception du ‘roi Soma,’” in *Essais sur le rituel*, vol. 3, ed. A. M. Blondeau and K. Schipper (Louvain and Paris, 1993).

122. On the heads, esp. the human head, cf. J. C. Heesterman, “The Case of the Severed Head,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 11 (1967): 22–43; see also Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, (Chicago, 1985), chap. 3). On the ritualistic problem of procuring the heads see also sec. 2.7 below.

123. Śat.Br. 7.5.2.22 f. See n. 109 above.

124. Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religion and in Early Judaism* (n. 14), 4.

125. Taitt.Br. 3.7.7.14 (see Taitt.Saṃh. 4.6.9k; ĀpŚS. 7.16.7).

126. H.-P. Schmidt, “The Origin of *ahimsā*,” in *Mélanges d’indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou* (Paris, 1968). For another view, equally deriving *ahimsā* from Vedic ritual origins (starting from alternating phases of abstention from meat before offering sacrifice and meat eating after it), see J. C. Heesterman, “Non-violence and Sacrifice,” *Indologica Taurinensia* 12 (1984): 119–27. On the all-but-obsessive insistence on undoing harm, see sec. 2.9 below.

127. P. Thieme, “Vorzarathustrisches bei den Zarathustriern,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957): 90.

128. On the invitation and reception of the brahmin officiants, see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 16), 6.

129. ĀpŚS. 10.1.13.

130. Ait.Br. 5.34.3; cf. Kauṣ.Br. 6.11. For the special position of the *brahman* officiant as a recipient of gifts see Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice,” 24–29. See also chap. 5 below.

131. On the *sadasyas* see Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice,” 34.

132. See chap. 2.9 and chap. 2, n. 146.

133. Taitt.Saṃh. 7.2.10.2,4. The droppings of the head (*śr̥ṣanyā niṣpadah*) that one is said to eat by accepting *dakṣiṇā* gifts seem distantly to recall the cut-off “head of the sacrifice.” Elsewhere the *dakṣiṇā* is said to be the remedy for the killing of the victim (Śat.Br. 2.2.2.1–2; 4.3.4.1–2; 11.1.2.1). Or the expression might refer to the (long) hair (i.e., of the consecrated—*dikṣita*—sacrificer). In that case the implication would still appear to be the same (for the long hair of such a *keśin* see Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice,” 16). See also sec. 6.3 below.

134. See Heesterman, “La réception du ‘roi Soma’” (n. 121).

135. See Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa (hereafter Jaim.Br.) 2.54; ĀpŚS. 13.6.4–6.

136. See n. 92 above.

137. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, 4.

138. Ait.Br. 6.34; Kauṣ.Br. 30.6; Śat.Br. 3.5.1.13–23; Pañc.Br. 16.2.1; Jaim.Br. 3.187–88 (W. Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 136). See S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice* (Paris, 1896 [repr. 1966]), 65. On the *Sādyaskra* see also sec. 7.7 below.

139. Ait.Br. 6.34.4.

140. Ait.Br. 6.35.1.

141. It is tempting to speculate whether such competitive proceedings might not dimly hark back to the original process of domestication (see n. 71 above). Considering that the tame and relatively small bovine derives from the wild and huge urus that is not a self-evident target for domestication, one could think of competitive cooperation in luring and catching such a prize animal, as seems to be suggested by the rival invocations addressed at the masterless and enraged animal. Or, conversely, one party might try to direct the animal’s rage at the other party. The two procedures need not be mutually exclusive: one would first have to catch the animal before one could further enrage it and send it to the other side. Such a situation is suggested by the asuras sending over the cow named *ksudh*, hunger, to the gods; not finding a place with the gods she returned to the asuras and “burned them down” (see n. 102 above; see also J. C. Heesterman, “Somakuh und Danaergabe,” *XXIII Deutscher Orientalistentag* [Sept. 16–20, 1985], [Stuttgart, 1989], 349–58). In short, this is a tricky sort of corrida. The end could then still be a festive meal of the finally exhausted and killed animal, bringing both parties together. The transition to domestication would be in the suspension of the kill. Such suspension would mean that the animal, instead of a sacrificial victim, is turned into a gift that demands reciprocation and thereby creates a lasting bond of competitive exchanges. The aggravating nature of this gift that calls for an adequate revanche can only strengthen the tie between the parties. In this way, domestication brings about, as already argued in more general terms, a broadening and deepening of human relationships as well as of the tensions involved in them (see also sec. 1.10 below). In any case, the rival invocations to soothe and bring to the fold the masterless and dangerous animal—which was rejected as a gift precisely because it was so dangerous—does suggest that rivalry and contest may have played an important part in the beginnings of the bovine’s domestication and the concurrent development of animal sacrifice in its domesticated form. Interestingly, the enraged animal is finally soothed by the winning contestant’s managing to give her a central place

in the sacrifice as the *uttaravedi*, the mound of the oblatinal fire and epitome of the domesticated earth (see also n. 142).

142. The rejected *dakṣiṇā*, whether called Vāc (Śat.Br. 3.5.1.18) or the Earth (Ait.Br. 6.35.1) is clearly imagined as a cow. Jaim.Br. 2.11.5, though also calling her Vāc (as in the Śat.Br.), gives her the form of a white mare, obviously making her the counterpart of the white solar steed that is finally accepted. The main point in these (relatively late) texts appears to be a play on the earth-heaven relation. This would, however, seem to be a reworking of the original material involving a male and a female animal, whether equid or bovine—a reworking that is also signaled by the otherwise strange shift in both the Śatapatha and Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇas from Ādityas and Aṅgirasas to the more common deva-asura opposition. The Aṅgirasas, unable to manage the useful but enraged female, lose twice by being forced to accept the more prestigious but less useful male. The Ādityas, on the other hand, successfully placate and win back the enraged female, leaving their opponents with a honorific but burdensome Trojan horse (its burdensome character is stressed by Pañc.Br. 16.12.4, which prescribes a special *sāman*, or chanting mode, to obviate the onerous burden of this *dakṣiṇā* gift). The reworking by the Śatapatha, Jaiminiya, and Aitareya Brāhmaṇas overlays this paradigm with the heaven-earth scheme. But in either case the essential point is the ambiguity of the *qui perd, gagne* game that is even deepened by the theme of heaven and earth: the heaven-going Ādityas win back the earth emblem, while the Aṅgirasas left behind on earth are forced to accept the heavenly solar emblem.

143. There is an obvious connection with the funerary meal (offered to brahmins), on which see the interesting analysis of Jonathan Parry, based on his fieldwork in Benares (“Death and Digestion: The Symbolism of Food and Eating in North Indian Mortuary Rites,” *Man*, 20, (1985): 612–30). On the explicit notion of cremation as a sacrifice see J. Parry, “Sacrificial Death and the Necrophagous Ascetic,” in *Death and the Regeneration of Life*, ed. M. Bloch and J. Parry (Cambridge, 1982), 74–110. Also see n. 85 above for cremation and burnt oblation.

144. See J. C. Heesterman, Review of *Beiträge zur Geschichte von Vegetarismus und Rinderverehrung in Indien* by L. Alsdorf, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 9 (1966): 147–49. See also sec. 6.3 below.

145. Thus, e.g., the warrior god Indra, having slain Viśvarūpa, is excluded by the latter’s father Tvaṣṭṛ from his soma sacrifice. Indra nonetheless forces his way in and, though uninvited, drinks the soma. It is not surprising that the forcibly taken soma severely harms Indra to the point of virtual disintegration, the soma coming out of all his bodily orifices. Tvaṣṭṛ, however, loses out, when he offers the leftover soma into the fire and thereby produces the devastating power of the united Agni and Soma that threatens both Tvaṣṭṛ and Indra. Indra, however, manages to kill the monster and so finally wins the contest (Taitt.Saṃh. 2.4.12.1; Śat.Br. 1.6.3.6).

146. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.6.7; see also 6.6.7.3.

147. See the Hamerton-Kelly symposium, (*Violent Origins* [n. 1]), 171: “Man, by contrast [to animals], is painfully aware of this dimension, the main characteristic of which is irreversibility,” its most drastic experience being death: hence the cyclical repetitiousness of sacrifice, which both acknowledges and intends to overcome the irreversibility of death.

148. M. Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. I. Cunison (London, 1954), 45.

149. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 41, 149. On the exiled king see also W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 129.

150. Mahābhārata 12.8.34.

151. On the distribution of the *dakṣiṇās* see Caland and Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma* (n. 16), 291–95.

152. Thus the *bhrātṛvyāḥ* are said to be in the *dhiṣṇya* hearths (Kāth.Samh. 34.15:46.12), but the *hotṛ*'s *dhiṣṇya* is considered “the abode (*āyatana*) of the sacrificer” (Taitt.Samh. 5.4.11.3.). On the *hotṛ*'s *dhiṣṇya* see also chap. 2, n. 25 below. We see here, then, the *hotṛ*, as sacrificer, between his competitors; or, as it is said of “the *brāhmaṇa* who knows thus”—i.e., the asura-killing capacity of the pounding sound of mortar and pestle—“having settled (*avasāya*) among his enemies” he takes away their force, *indriya vīrya* (Maitr.Samh. 4.1.6:8.12; Kāth.Samh. 31.4:5.15). See J. C. Heesterman, “‘I am who I am’: Truth and Identity in Vedic Ritual” *Beiträge zur Hermeneutik indischer und abendländischer Religionstraditionen*, ed. G. R. F. Oberhammer (Vienna 1991), 147–77, esp. 158–64.

153. Taitt.Br. 3.2.1.2; ĀpŚS. 1.1.9.

154. Taitt.Samh. 1.6.7.1; Maitr.Samh. 1.4.5:92.9; Kāth.Samh. 31.15:17.5. See also sec. 2.5 below.

155. Maitr.Samh. 4.2.6:27.18.

156. It is curious that this rather crude story about cattle rustling and the ensuing fight is given in explanation of the otherwise peaceful invocation of the *iḍā*, the sacrificial food represented as a milk cow (*iḍāhvāna*). During the invocation the sacrificer should recite the two sets of cow names, the divine and the human (ĀpŚS. 4.10.4; MānŚS. 1.4.2.10). Kṛita knew only one set of names and so loses out. The *āhvāna*, then, is derived from the *vihava*, the rival invocation. Our text shows the transition. Instead of a *vihava* by two parties a single actor addresses two sets of cows—“these” (divine ones) and the (terrestrial) “others.”

157. See sec. 1.7 above.

158. See sec. 1.9 above.

159. On the verbal contest, see F. B. J. Kuiper, “The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 4 (1960):217–81; Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, chap. 5.

160. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 73, 221, n. 15.

161. *Ibid.*, 51. See also sec. 2.7.

162. Mahābhārata 5.57.12, 154.4 (Bombay ed.) 12.99.12 (*raṇayajña*); 5.139.29 (*śastrayajña*); 18.2.2 (*raṇavahni*). See A. Hildebeitel, *The Sacrifice of Battle* (Ithaca, 1976), 318; also G. J. Held, *The Mahābhārata, an Ethnological Study* (Leiden, 1935), 107, 109. For Kurukṣetra as the gods’ place of sacrifice, see Śat.Br. 14.1.1.2. In this case too rivalry (among the gods) for preeminence is central to their sacrifice.

163. M. Mauss, *The Gift* (n. 148), 54.



## Chapter Two

1. See, e.g., R. Lingat, *Les sources du droit dans le système traditionnel de l'Inde* (Paris, 1967), 261, on the priestly sacrificial function of the king in meting out punishment.

2. See sec. 1.2 above.

3. Exodus 24:8.

4. Luke 22:20; cf. Mark 14:24, Matthew 26:28, 1 Corinthians 11:24.

5. See G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2d. ed. (Westminster, 1945), 50–60.

6. *Ibid.*, 273. For the New Testament understanding of the Lord's Supper as sacrifice, see also G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Eucharist in Bible and Liturgy* (Cambridge, 1983), lecture 4. Even so, as the author cogently argues, the Lord's Supper is not the sacrificial Passover. In fact, "the Passion is over before the Passover begins" (44). The communal meal of the Lord's Supper is not by itself explicitly sacrificial. Its sacrificial understanding is clearly an innovation.

7. *Ibid.*, 282.

8. See J. C. Heesterman, "Veda and Society," *Studia Orientalia* 50 (1980): 55–58.

9. See 1 Corinthians 5:7: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

10. Dix, *Shape of the Liturgy*, 274 n. 1.

11. For other examples, such as the ancient Greek ithyphallic herms or, more generally, libations to mark places, roads, or boundaries, the carrying of branches by supplicants, the offering of a grass seat to dissolve tension or the supplicant's clasping the knees of the threatening partner see W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Calif., 1979), 39–45.

12. The autonomy of ritual makes it a perfectly valid enterprise—though not the only possible one, as J. F. Staal seems to imply—to subject it to a purely formal analysis, irrespective of any meaning or purpose assigned to it, to tease out the rules of its "syntax" as "rules without meaning." Incidentally, this does come curiously near to Huizinga's insistence on the primacy of play and game (see chap. 1, n. 98). It is, however, an altogether different matter to state bluntly that "le rituel védique est un rituel sans religion" (J. F. Staal, *Jouer avec le feu* [Paris, 1990], 8). It depends, of course, on how one defines religion. But even if one defines it away as an encumbrance, it cannot be denied that Vedic ritual is emphatically concerned with sacrifice. Staal is, of course, entitled not to be interested in sacrifice. Quite possibly he may even want to deny sacrifice by calling it ritual *tout court*—which as we saw will not do. As Huizinga said, one may deny nearly all abstractions; one can deny seriousness but not play—and certainly not the play of sacrifice. This does not invalidate the enterprise of a purely formal, synchronic analysis of its syntactic rules. However, the problem is not with the syntactic rules as such but with their relationship to sacrifice. In other words, we have to do with ritual construction and its history. It is this—not "meaning"—that the brāhmaṇa texts are discussing. And it may well bedevil the search for an adequate syntax—as it does the search for meaning, for sacrifice after all is itself an unsoluble problem for its practitioners no less

than it is for us. Put briefly, sacrifice interferes with the syntactic structure. The ritual construction of sacrifice cannot but show succeeding “blueprints” overlaying each other, none of them complete and satisfactory and all therefore open to question and revision, as the brāhmaṇas (and the sūtras as well) go to show. It is not surprising that Staal has no use for the brāhmaṇas other than the dustbin. They might help him, though, to see clearer in the matter of ritual construction.

13. See sec. 1.9 above.

14. Cf. ĀpŚS. 14.20.4.

15. ĀpŚS. 5.10.4–5.

16. The association of the two ladles with the sacrificer and his rival, respectively, is frequent; see Maitr.Samh. 4.1.12:17.2; Kāth.Samh. 31.9:11.17; Taitt.Br. 3.3.5.4, 7.9, 9.7; Śat.Br. 1.3.2.2; 1.5.2.2.

17. Cf. ĀpŚS. 3.5.7; A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (Jena, 1880), 140. When derived from *upa-br*, “to offer, bestow,” *upabhrt* may very well mean “sacrificer” (see E. P. Hamp, “Vedic *upabhrt*,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 22 [1980]: 141). Viewed in this way the *upabhrt* ladle does indeed stand not for the sacrificer but for his opponent who is equally a sacrificer.

18. See Taitt.Samh. 1.6.10.4–5.

19. Taitt.Br. 1.6.5.4; Śat.Br. 2.3.2.6.

20. See J. C. Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” in *Agni*, ed. J. F. Staal (Berkeley, Calif., 1987) 2:83; H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* (Vienna, 1982), 372. See also chap. 4.8 below.

21. Cf. sec. 1.9. For the association of the *dhiṣṇyas* with the enemies see sec. 1.10 and chap. 1, n. 152.

22. Cf. L. Renou, *Études sur le vocabulaire du Rgveda* (Pondichéry, 1958), 59; J. C. Heesterman, “‘I am who I am’: Truth and Identity in Vedic Ritual,” in *Beiträge zur Hermeneutik*, ed. G. R. F. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1991), 162.

23. Taitt.Samh. 6.3.1.2–4; Kāth.Samh. 26.1:120.14–20; Maitr.Samh. 3.8.10:109.10–17.

24. Taitt.Samh. 6.3.1.2–3.

25. Interestingly, the *dhiṣṇya* of the *hotr*—originally the sacrificer—is equally placed on the west-east line (the *pr̥sthā* or “spine” of the enclosure), forming the point where the south-north and the west-east lines intersect. In this way the *hotr* or rather his *dhiṣṇya* can indeed be called “the navel of the sacrifice” (Taitt.Samh. 6.3.1.5.). On the competition involved see chap. 1.10 and chap. 1, n. 152. also above.

26. Taitt.Samh. 6.3.1.1; Kāth.Samh. 26.1:121.4; Maitr.Samh. 3.8.10:110.3; Śat.Br. 3.6.1.27–29; cf. also Maitr.Samh. 1.9.8:139.15; Kāth.Samh. 9.15:116.6.

27. See T. F. Moody, *The Agnyādheya: Establishment of the Sacred Fires* (PhD. diss., McMaster University, 1980), 72–83, on the two perpendicular axes of the places of sacrifice.

28. ĀpŚS. 9.10.15; cf. Maitr.Samh. 1.8.9:130.9. See also Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” 85. In this way we can also understand that the place of sacrifice should not be crossed by a path; nor should there be room for a path to the east of the

*devayajana*, between it and a water course or pool (Kāth.Samh. 25.2:104.21, 105.3; cf. ĀpŚS. 10.20.11).

29. BaudhŚS. 2.16:60.1.

30. See chap. 1.11 above.

31. See chap. 6.1 above.

32. Jaim.Br. 2.297–99 (W. Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 156). See J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 85.

33. Jaim.Br. 1.337.

34. See Jaim.Br. 2.249.

35. Śat.Br. 1.5.4.6–11; Pañc.Br. 21.13.2.

36. See, e.g., Śat.Br. 11.4.1.9, 5.3.13; Bṛhad.Ār.Up. 1.10.9.11; Chand.Up. 1.8.6. For a study of these and similar passages see M. Witzel, “The Case of the Shattered Head,” *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 13–14 (1987): 363–415, who stresses the shattering or busting of the head rather than its severing. See also chap. 2.7 and n. 120 below.

37. Thus, Hermann Oldenberg entitled his study of the brāhmaṇas *Vorwissen-schaftliche Wissenschaft: die Weltanschauung der Brāhmaṇa-Texte* (Göttingen, 1919), while Sylvain Lévi, no less appositely, wrote about *La doctrine du sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas* (Paris, 1898 [repr. 1966]). It does not seem, however, that these important pioneer studies do justice to the innovative departure of systematic ritualistic thought.

38. Jaim.Br. 2.69–70 (W. Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 128). On the importance of this passage see Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 32 above), 32.

39. Such computation (*saṁkhyāna*), said to be immortal (*amṛta*) compared with the uncomputed (*asaṁkhyāna*), is indeed called the “panoply of the gods” (*devānām senā*); Jaim.Br. 2.73.

40. In the original, *tasya parājitasya rājāsūcyat*, and again about “the second,” that is, Mṛtyu’s sacrifice, *yo hi dvitīyo yajña āsīd asūcyat sa*. The word *asūcyat* is problematic (Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra offer *asūcyat*). Caland suggests either (*saṁ*)*sūcyati*, “to burn or to decay, putrify,” or (*saṁ*)*sūsyati*, “to dry up.” Both meanings would suit the two passages. Śuc, “to burn,” might be a reminder of the soma that Tvaṣṭṛ poured in the fire, producing thereby the threatening demon Vṛtra who holds in himself fire and soma, both called therefore demoniac, *asurya* (Jaim.Br. 2.155). It might explain Mṛtyu’s falling backward—in panic?—and his flight to the women’s quarters (in the same way Tvaṣṭṛ is said to fall backward taking refuge with the women; see n. 44 below). It would however suit the second occurrence less well. At any rate, it is clear that Mṛtyu’s soma as well as his sacrifice were invalidated.

41. ĀpŚS. 21.17–20.

42. See Pañc.Br. 16.7.2.

43. Caland offers *tasmāt patnī sabacayas sa yad āsuta ity asuta iti haitan, na hi so śūyata*. Two points seem to be clear: the defeated Mṛtya takes refuge with the wives, and there is a word play on *āsuta* and *asuta* (or *asūta*?) that turns on his being pressed (like the soma), i.e., killed, instead of being quickened (see Taitt.Br. 2.7.4.1: *bato hyeṣaḥ, abhiṣuto hyeṣa, na hi hataḥ śūyate*; see also Kāth.Samh. 37.5:87.8). The

text could be read *tasmāt patnīśahacaryas sa; yad āsuta ity āsuta iti haitan . . .*, “Therefore he—i.e., Mr̥tyu—goes about, consorts, with the wives; as to [it being said that] ‘he was pressed [like the soma]’ this [means] ‘he [remained] unquickened,’ for he was not quickened.” For all his consorting with the wives and the pressed soma (possibly here with sexual connotation), Mr̥tyu was not quickened again into independent action (but remained suborned by Prajāpati). His lot seems to be like that of the immolated horse in the *āśvamedha*, who is made to have intercourse with the royal sacrificer’s first consort (see below).

44. For this well-known episode, see, inter alia, Śat.Br. 1.6.1.3–17; 5.5.4.2–11; 12.7.1.1–9. On Tvaṣṭṛ and the wives of the gods see H. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart, 1923), 237–40; A. Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie*, 2d ed. (Breslau, 1929), 2:380–87. The similarity between Mr̥tyu’s defeat and Tvaṣṭṛ’s misadventure (see n. 43 above) is striking. The sacrificial fight of Indra and Tvaṣṭṛ probably provided the model for the contest of Prajāpati and Mr̥tyu.

45. See Hillebrandt, *Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (n. 17 above), 151–60; ĀpŚS. 3.8.2–9.9. It is dealt with as a separate sacrifice having its own *idā* rite.

46. Jaim.Br. 2.155.

47. Maitr.Samh. 1.9.8:139.17; Kāth.Samh. 9.15:118.8. On the attack along the line running from the south to the north see chap. 2.2 and n. 26.

48. Śat.Br. 1.9.2.12; ĀpŚS. 3.9.3.

49. See n. 43 above.

50. Śat.Br. 3.8.2.5.

51. ĀpŚS. 20.17.17.

52. Śat.Br. 10.4.3.1–9.

53. Ibid., 3.

54. Ibid., 9. See also n. 151 below.

55. Ibid., 10.5.2.23, 6.5.8; see also Bṛhad.Ār.Up. 1.2.7. Interestingly, this refers to the fire altar that is identified with Prajāpati as well as with Agni. We have concluded already that one’s fire is intimately connected with oneself and, as cremation fire, is also one’s death (see sec. 1.6 above).

56. *asūcyat*; see n. 40 above.

57. Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (hereafter Jaim.Up.Br.) 2.10.1.

58. See Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice* (n. 37 above), 13–35.

59. See sec. 1.9 above.

60. See sec. 1.10 above.

61. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 32 above), 95–107.

62. See A. Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur*, vol. 3, pt. 2 of *Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde* (Strasbourg, 1897), 97–105; J. Gonda, *The Ritual Sūtras* (Wiesbaden, 1977); M. Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, 1986), s.v. Vedism.

63. Taitt.Br. 3.3.9.12; see ĀpŚS. 1.1.4 and 3.13.2 (beginning and conclusion of the new and full moon sacrifice).

64. See W. Caland and V. Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (Paris, 1906) nos. 26, 255.

65. Jaim.Br. 1.258 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 92), where the riddle of the dog is also found. See also W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 53, on the equation of the chant (*sāman*) with the year cycle, both ends meeting like those of the *Wagenburg* of the resting trek or those of a necklace or curled-up snake.

66. See sec. 2.7. For the enigma of sacrifice, as expressed in the ambiguous play on the verb *karoti*, “to make and to sacrifice,” see ch. I, par. 8.

67. For such *paribhāsas* cf. ĀpŚS. 24.1–4. For a survey see S. C. Chakrabarti, *The Paribhāsas in the Śrautasūtras*, (Calcutta, 1980).

68. See ĀpŚS. 24.2.28–31. The weaving metaphor is a standard one; the verb *tanoti*, “to stretch out, to weave,” is frequently used for performing, “setting up,” sacrifice.

69. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 64, 70. For the normal paradigm of this part of the soma ritual see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, nos. 198–201.

70. See sec. 2.3 above.

71. Pañc.Br. 7.7.9–10. For the liturgy see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, 306–9.

72. Jaim.Br. 1.247 (W. Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 90).

73. Cf. P. E. Dumont, *L’Āśvamedha* (Paris, 1927), 185. The Śatapatha even asserts that the horse has no omentum at all (Śat.Br. 13.5.2.10; Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra [hereafter KātyŚS] 20.7.7; cf. ĀpŚS. 20.18.10; BaudhŚS. 15.30:236.1). Instead of the diminutive omentum the fat is taken out. It may well be that the fat, rather than the omentum as such, was originally the essential item. The ritual use of the bovine omentum may owe its importance to the fat attached to it. At any rate, the procedure of the horse’s immolation seems to be modeled on that of the bovine victim.

74. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 259. The Nambudiri brahmins whose *agnicayana* was filmed by Staal and Gardner (see J. F. Staal, *Agni*, vol. 1, [Berkeley, Calif., 1983]) even went so far as to burn the whole place of sacrifice in a spectacular bonfire. Incidentally, this is one of the few occasions that specific attention is given to the smoke by way of mantras addressed to it (ĀpŚS. 13.24.17; Hiranyakeśin Śrauta Sūtra [hereafter HirŚS.] cf. sec. 1.5 above.

75. Significantly the texts connect the clearing of the bush by fire at the *aṣṭakā* festival with burning the grass layer on the *mahāvedi* (see Taitt.Samh. 3.3.8.4–5). See also chap. 1, n. 65.

76. For the Black Yajurveda see ĀpŚS. 3.13.3; HirŚS. 2.6:236; BhārŚS. 3.12.2; VaikhŚS. 7.11:77.3; MānŚS. 1.3.5.21. The brāhmaṇas of the Black Yajurveda do not mention this act. For the White Yajurveda, see Śat.Br. 1.9.2.29–31; KātyŚS. 3.8.5. See also Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (n. 17), 169. BaudhŚS. 1.21:33.5–8 has only a handful of *barhis* smeared with ghee thrown in the *āhavanīya* fire. This procedure seems to be related to the *gr̥hya* rite, known as *yajñāvāstu*, at the end of the domestic sacrifice or *pākayajña* (GobhGS. 1.8.27–29; Khādīra Gr̥hya Sūtra [hereafter KhādGS.] 2.1.26–28). The smearing with ghee, however, suggests a fueling of the fire rather than a disposal.

77. See J. C. Heesterman, “The Ritualist’s Problem,” in S. D. Joshi (ed.), *Amṛtadhārā*, ed. S. D. Joshi (Poona, 1984), 174.

78. ĀpŚS. 5.14.6.

79. See sec. 2.2 and n. 28 above.

80. See Heesterman, *Consecration* (n. 69 above), 127–32.

81. Jaim.Br. 2.193.

82. BaudhŚS. 11.7:76.5–7.

83. See KātyŚS. 1.4.24. See also W. Caland, *Een indogermaansch lustratiegebruik*, *Mededelingen Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen*, 1898, 283.

84. ĀpŚS. 17.12.4–5. For other examples see Caland, *Ein indogermaansch lustratiegebruik*, 295.

85. BaudhŚS. 22.14:137.20.

86. The matching right and left turns perfectly suit F. Staal’s thesis of the “meaninglessness of ritual” (*Numen* 26 (1979): 2–22). However, one should not overlook that this “meaninglessness” was not a natural given but the result of conscious construction. Generally speaking, sequences of commonsensical acts and gestures were lifted out of their “organic context” and made autonomous. Deprived of their original meaning or function and so neutralized they were reemployed in a consciously devised closed system that could only refer to its own internal order. Acts, gestures, and words had no other meaning anymore than their syntactic place in the system’s order. This is what I propose to call “second-order” ritual (see chap. 2.8 below).

87. Vait.S. 5.18. Normally, however, the fire would not be transported on a *ratha*, which is hardly appropriate for this purpose, but on a cart (*agniṣṭham anas*, fire cart; BaudhŚS. 14.19:185.15). We may recognize here an instance of the ritualists’ attempts to reconnect, however awkwardly, their ritual construction with lived-in realities (see sec. 2.6).

88. See Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” p. 85. See also below, sec. 4.6 and n. 82.

89. See Pañc.Br. 16.15.

90. Ibid., 16.15.4.

91. Cf. ĀpŚS. 22.2.16–24.

92. W. Caland, “Eine dritte Mitteilung über das Vādhūlasūtra,” *Acta Orientalia* 4, no. 14 (1926): 15. See also M. Sparreboom and J. C. Heesterman, *The Ritual of Setting Up the Sacrificial Fires according to the Vādhūla School* (Vienna, 1989), 115, 126. For the twelve-day period after the setting up see ĀpŚS. 5.21.2.

93. Pañc.Br. 7.7.13. For the relevant “laud,” the first *prṣṭha-stotra* of the midday, see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 63 above), no. 199.

94. Jaim.Br. 1.135 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 32).

95. See n. 69 above.

96. As already observed by Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie* (n. 43 above), 1:131.

97. See Heesterman, *Consecration* (n. 68 above), 226.

98. ĀpŚS. 18.8.1.

99. It is significant that the *rājasūya*, though ostensibly meant for the king's investiture, is not understood by most commentators to be the decisive "sacrament" that legitimates the king (see Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* [n. 32 above], 111, 231 n. 24).

100. Śat.Br. 14.1.1.32. Disposing of the *dakṣiṇā* would be tantamount to giving up one's honor (*yaśas*). Yet this passage does recognize the need for the circulation of wealth, albeit *contre-cœur*.

101. Śat.Br. 1.1.1.6, 9.3.23. Cf. J. C. Heesterman, "I am who I am" (n. 22 above), 147–77.

102. See Heesterman, "The Ritualist's Problem" (n. 77 above), 176.

103. See ĀpŚS. 16.11.7; Taitt.Samh. 5.2.1.7. For the *vātsapra* hymn see Taitt.Samh. 4.2.2; Ṛgveda 10.45.

104. See Śat.Br. 6.8.1.1–15.

105. Ibid., 4. Cf. n. 106, below.

106. Jaim.Br. 2.193: "By means of the *rathantara* they run the divine race, by means of the *ratha* the human one. Therefore they should run [the real race also], so as to win both races."

107. See par. 5, above.

108. See J. C. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 32 above), chap. 3.

109. See A. Bergaigne, *La religion védique*, 2d ed. (Paris, 1963), 2:80–83.

110. Maitr.Samh. 4.1.9:11.15; Kāth.Samh. 31.7:8.15; Taitt.Br. 3.2.8.7; Śat.Br. 1.2.1.2.

111. Kāth.Samh. 29.4:172.5.

112. Cf., however, Śat.Br. 4.5.1.9. Here the barrenness of the *vaśā* is stressed—"when no *rasa* was left [at the end of the sacrifice], thence the *maitrāvaruṇī vaśā* came about; therefore she does not procreate, for seed arises out of *rasa* [and] from seed cattle; because she came about at the end, therefore she comes after the end of the sacrifice." It would seem that the Śatapatha intends to put a stop to the endless chain, by enclosing sacrifice strictly between its beginning and its conclusion as a single, clearly bounded event.

113. Taitt.Samh. 6.3.10.1. Although the context is the taking out and offering of the victim's omentum—in the *śrauta* ritual the head is no longer severed—the cutting of the head, now relegated to mythology, is mentioned immediately afterwards. Going to heaven through the sacrificial victim and fearing that men would come up after them, the gods "cut off its [the victim's] head and made the vital fluid (*medha*) gush forth" (Taitt.Samh. 2; see Śat.Br. 3.8.3.1, 12).

114. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 46, 215 n. 3.

115. Maitr.Samh. 2.4.1:38.5; Kāth.Samh. 12.10:172.8; cf. MānŚS. 11.1.4.

116. That the killing was originally done when the victim was bound to the stake (*yūpa*) appears in Ṛgveda 1.162.9, in the context of the horse sacrifice: "What the fly ate of the horse's gore or *what stuck to the post*, to the axe . . . all that of you should be with the gods" (emphasis mine).

117. In Vedic ritual the victim's blood is associated with inauspiciousness and is therefore little used. In the normal *śrauta* paradigm it is disposed of in the offal pit (*ūvadhyagoha*, next to the slaughterer's fire) as an offering to the demonic *rākṣaṣas* (see ĀpŚS.7.18.4). Exceptionally the blood of the sacrificial horse is boiled and offered to the equally inauspicious Rudra (see Sat.Br.13.3.4.2–4; Dumont, *L'Āśvamedha* [n. 73], 185). Also in the domestic bull sacrifice (*Śūlagava*) the blood is destined for Rudra (Pāraskara Gr̥hya Sūtra [hereafter PārGS.] 3.8.11). See also sec. 7.3 and chap. 3, n. 37). The Irānī Zoroastrians on the other hand drink the blood streaming out when the victim's throat is slit (M. Boyce, "Mihragān among the Irani Zoroastrians," in *Mithraic Studies*, ed. J. R. Hinnells [Manchester, 1971], 1:111, 115; animal sacrifice, though generally enjoined for Zoroastrian feasts, seems to be particularly associated with the Mithra festival; see 1:114; see also M. Boyce, "Ataš-Zōhr and Āb-Zōhr," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1966:107).

118. See Sat.Br. 8.2.1.27. The obligatory propitiation is to be brought about by the *āpri* verses accompanying the fore offerings.

119. BaudhŚS. 10.9:8.8.

120. BaudhŚS. 10.9:8.7; cf. ĀpŚS. 16.6.2; HirŚS. 11.1.67; VaikhŚS. 18.3:254.7; MānŚS. 6.1.2.23 mention as the cause of death an arrow or lightning. Witzel, "The Case of the Shattered Head" (n. 36 above), 412, suggests that it was only at a late date, when human sacrifice was out and animal victims were substituted by images made of flour (*piṣṭapaśu*), that the ritualists had "to resort to such measures as to seek out the head of someone killed by lightning or in battle." Admittedly the brāhmaṇa texts are silent on the provenance of the human head. But there is a fair measure of agreement among the sūtras, suggesting that the fallen warrior's head represents an old tradition. The solution they offer does not seem to be a new invention. Rather the warrior's head harks back to a previous state of affairs, when one did indeed have to risk one's head in sacrifice. Significantly Baudhāyana's vaiśya is not just any vaiśya. He can be shown to be the one who challenges the sacrificer and his party on their way to fetch the clay for the bricks. No less significant is the prescript that he should be guarding an anthill—it is a seven-holed piece of anthill that should be put at the place where the head is taken (*tām dakṣinato vaiśyo gopāyan āste*; BaudhŚS. 10.1:1.11; see *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 54). In a way he is "guarding" his own head, as well as his cattle. The episode seems to be related to (a "preclassical" form of) the *āśvamedha*, which is intimately connected with the *agnicayana* and, moreover, replete with denatured contests. What is striking, though, is the sūtra authorities' insistence on having the real thing, just as we noticed in the cases of the chariot race and of carrying the *ukhya* fire. But they could not have their heads and enjoy their ritual too.

121. Śat.Br. 6.2.1.38.

122. There appears to be a play on the word *utsanna*, "removed, disappeared," which is also the technical term for an abolished ritual practice. At the same time the actual removal—as different from abolishing the practice of the real heads—seems to refer to the practice of throwing the carcasses away in the water after cutting the heads (Śat.Br. 6.2.1.7; cf. ĀpŚS. 16.8.2; BaudhŚS. 25.29:162.14; MānŚS. 6.1.3.11). The nearest the *śrauta* ritual would come to such a practice is the *ūvadhyagoha*, the offal pit, or one might think of the *avabhr̥tha*, the final bath of the



soma sacrifice, where the pressed-out soma stalks are thrown away. This would make the muddy clay equivalent to the (decomposed) animal corpses and thereby underpin the justification for the earthen heads. But the Śatapatha rejects this reasoning, for in collecting the clay, one would only retrieve the headless trunks, proper for the bricks of the altar (the body of Agni-Prajāpati) but incapable of substituting the head (Śat.Br. 6.2.1.13). Using earthen heads would come down to doing away with the sacrificial animals. “For if one does not know the proper procedure (*āvrt*) of these [animals] and the exposition [of the equivalences, *brāhmaṇa*], the animals would be removed (*utsanna*)” (Śat.Br. 39); i.e., the animal sacrifice would in fact be cancelled and the whole operation would be void. So there is no way around sacrifice. “He should actually sacrifice those five victims” (Śat.Br. 39), including the human victim.

123. The corresponding KātyŚS. 16.1.13 therefore laconically prescribes (as one alternative) to immolate the human victim and cut off the head, although he gets the benefit of a separate shed. As to the severing of the heads this authority disingenuously endeavors to turn this act into a proper *śrauta* procedure by interposing a grass blade (as one does in felling the tree for the sacrificial post and when cutting open the immolated victim).

124. Śat.Br. 6.2.2.15.

125. KātyŚS. 16.1.15.19,21; see ĀpŚS. 16.7.12–8.2. The Black Yajurveda prescribes obtaining the human head, as we saw, from outside. In the sacrifice the human victim is replaced by an extra he-goat dedicated to Prajāpati. It is with this he-goat that sacrifice is then completed in a regular fashion, after the others have been “released”—i.e., taken out of the ritual—to be beheaded.

126. KātyŚS. 16.1.33, 38. The one he-goat is then dedicated either to Prajāpati or to Vāyu. See ĀpŚS. 16.8.8.

127. *Acta Orientalia* 6, no. 108 (1927). See also secs. 6.1, 6.6 and 7.5. Originally the secret knowledge of the victim’s head will have been concerned with its restoration. Ritualism changed this to the secret of obtaining the head that was no longer to be had in a ritually proper way.

128. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 32 above), 91. See further sec. 7.9, below.

129. See *ibid.*, 85, referring to the story of Sthūra being killed on his place of sacrifice.

130. See ĀpŚS. 11.9.8; 11.13.10; 13.6.6.

131. See ĀpŚS. 10.1.11. BaudhŚS. 2.3:37.9 mentions the *sadasya* as an appointed priest on an equal footing with *adhvaryu*, *hotr*, *udgātṛ*, and *brahman*, but concedes that according to some there is no *sadasya* (see 21.22:109.3).

132. See M. Biarreau, *Théorie de la connaissance et philosophie de la parole* (Paris, 1964), 89, 90 n. 1, who points out that the Mīmāṃsā discusses only the non-worldly “fruit” of heaven.

133. Cf. Ch. Malamoud, “Terminer le sacrifice: remarques sur les honoraires rituels,” in *Le sacrifice dans l’Inde ancienne*, ed. M. Biradeau and Ch. Malamoud (Paris, 1976), 155–99, esp. 179–82, discusses the *mīmāṃsā* point of view; see 203 for the Arthaśāstra view of the *dakṣiṇā* as *vetana*, “wage” (3.14.28).

134. Thus the royal sacrificer, who performs the *rājasūya*, no longer seeks consecration as a king but desires to win heaven; see n. 98 above.

135. See H. W. Köhler, *Śrad-dhā in der vedischen und altbuddhistischen Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1973).

136. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.4.9:61.4; see J. C. Heesterman, “Dakṣiṇā,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 (1959): 243. E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), 174, is of the opinion that *śraddhā* only refers to man’s attitude to a god, not to relations of man to man. Our passage shows otherwise.

137. Ṛgveda 10.151.3.

138. See Heesterman, *Consecration* (n. 69 above), 203.

139. See sec. 2.4 and n. 12.

140. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 32 above), 53–56. See also n. 120 above.

141. See *ibid.*, 118.

142. Cf. BaudhŚS. 10.1:1.9 which prescribes making ready the seven-holed ant-hill that is to be guarded by a vaiśya (see n. 119 above) at the *viśuvat* point halfway on the road to the loampit where the clay is to be fetched. In the standardized *śrauta* ritual, however, the *viśuvat* is situated within the regular place of sacrifice at one-third the distance from the *gārhapatya* to the *āhavanīya* hearth at the east end (2.17:62.14).

143. See Lévi, *Doctrine* (n. 37 above), 16; Oldenberg, *Weltanschauung* (n. 37), 37.

144. See ĀpŚS. 7.3.7; see also M. Sparreboom, *Chariots in the Veda* (Leiden, 1985), 12.

145. See chap. 7.

146. See Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1962): 20–24; see also “The Ritualist’s Problem” (n. 85 above), 169.

147. See Taitt.Saṃh. 6.4.8.1, regarding the sacrificial “killing” of “King Soma,” i.e., the pressing of the soma stalks.

148. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 64 above), no. 256; see also Kāṭh.Saṃh. 29.4:172.5–10; Maitr.Saṃh. 4.8.6:114.10; Taitt.Saṃh. 6.6.7.3. This cow seems to be the same as the one in Manu’s sacrificial riddle (Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.7.1; see above, sec. 1.8).

149. See above, sec. 1.9 and n. 126.

150. See Śat.Br. 11.2.6.13. On the *ātmayājñin* see the passages discussed by H. W. Bodewitz, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* I.1–65 (Leiden, 1973), 304. See also sec. 8.2 below.

151. See Śat.Br. 10.4.3.9 (becoming immortal, after death, either through knowledge—of the equivalences—or through the ritual “work”). See also Śat.Br. 10.5.8.12,4.16. Similarly, see 12.8.1.16 (“as the purified *surā* liquor is cleared of all impurity, so the sacrificer who “knows thus” is freed thereby whether he performs the *sautrāmaṇi* sacrifice, or only knows it”); Taitt.Br. 2.7.18.1,3,4 (both the one who performs the *viḡhana* soma sacrifice and the one who knows it defeat the rival); Kauṣ.Br. 2.8 (the knowledge of the *agnihotra*—i.e., that the fire and the sun, night

and day, inhalation and exhalation offer themselves in each other every morning and evening—is by itself as good as the actual performance of this twice-daily offering). See also the apt observations of G. U. Thite, *Sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇa Texts* (Poona, 1975), 329. See also W. O. Kaelber, *Tapta-Mārga* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), 74–81, who rightly sees here “a Vedic watershed.”

152. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 38.

153. Śat.Br. 10.5.2.23, 6.5.8; see BṛhadĀrUp. 1.2.7. See also sec. 2.3 above.

154. On the concept of “canon” as the ultimately legitimizing touchstone, see B. K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 1989), 13–20; see also J. Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon,” in his *Imagining Religion* (Chicago, 1982), 36–52.

155. See J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), 314.

156. Ibid., 300; see 258 on the bull and its consecration (purification and ceremonially cutting hair from the tail).

157. See Boyce, “Ātaš Zōhr and Āb-Zōhr” (n. 117 above), 104, 108, 110; “Mihragān” (n. 117 above), 106 n. 3, 108 n. 9; M. Boyce, “Haoma, the Priest,” in *W. B. Henning Commemoration Volume* (London, 1970), 67, 78. Apart from the burnt oblation it is interesting that Boyce also notes that “there are references to an alternative practice [as different from cutting off particular parts of the victim’s head] of setting the whole head of the sacrificial animal for consecration” (“Haoma, the Priest,” 73, 79), reminding us of the Vedic “head of the sacrifice” (see sec. 2.7 above).

158. See M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, 1975), 1:214–19. G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart, 1965), 109, however, maintains that the prophet rejected sacrifice altogether.

159. See Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans*, 65, referring to S. Wikander, *Der arische Männerbund* (Lund, 1938), 53.

160. See M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l’Iran ancien* (Paris, 1963), 235.

161. It is tempting, though, to surmise that the appearance of a “darkclad figure in a horridly realistic monkey mask” capering about the room as well as mime dances as part of the revelry on the evening of the Mithra feast may go back to less peaceful proceedings. Boyce notes that the mime and clowning seem to be an old tradition (M. Boyce, “Mihragan,” 115, referring to G. Widengren, “Harlekinstracht und Mönchkutte,” *Orientalia Suecana* 2 (1953): 41–111). Generally speaking, such mummeries may well go back to less harmless usages, especially of young men, at the time of festivals.

162. The recent abolition of animal sacrifice among the Parsis is shown by Boyce as due to the impact of their Indian surroundings (see n. 157). It would seem, though, that it is only in the context of nationalism and the modern search for identity, which rejects sacrifice as uncivilized, that the pressure for abolition became unavoidable. In other words, the Bombay Parsis who were in close contact with the nationalist leadership took part in a general reformistic Indian development. Even

so, the apparent ease with which animal sacrifice could lapse, rather than be explicitly rejected, shows that it had long ago lost its pivotal importance.

163. See U. A. Cedzich., *Das Ritual der Himmelsmeister im Spiegel früher Quellen* (Würzburg, 1987), 44. Yin-ssu calls to mind Mṛtyu's activity, prudishly called "what is frivolously acted (*yad mṛthācaryate*)," in his contest with Prajāpati (see chap. 2, above).

164. See J. C. Heesterman, "The King's Order," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 20 (1986): 8.

165. The exclusion of the śūdra is, however, not watertight; see, e.g., ĀpŚS. 1.19.9, 5.3.18.

166. R. K. Yerkes, *Sacrifice in Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism* (New York, 1952), 198.

167. Ibid., 211; see S. W. Sykes, "Sacrifice in the New Testament," in *Sacrifice*, ed. M. F. C. Bourdillon and M. Fortes (London, 1980), 69.

### Chapter Three

1. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), 61.

2. See, e.g., D. Knipe, *In the Image of Fire* (Delhi, 1975), 111–13; W. O. Kaelber, *Tapta-Mārga* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), 16.

3. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.8.

4. See sec. 2.10 above.

5. See J. P. de Menasce, *Feux et fondations pieuses dans le droit sassanide* (Paris, 1964), 46; M. Molé, *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien* (Paris, 1963), 100, 126, 226.

6. As maintained by G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 109; see sec. 2.10 and chap. 2, n. 158.

7. See J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), 242; M. Boyce, "On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968): 58.

8. See A. V. Williams Jackson in *Grundriss der iranischen Philologie*, ed. H. Geiger and E. Kuhn, (Strasbourg, 1895–1904 [repr. 1974]), 2: 641. See also Knipe, *In the Image of Fire*, 20–26.

9. For the jural and political importance of the dynastic fire it is significant that the Sasanian ruler Ardashir razed the fire temples set up without royal authority by local rulers (see M. Boyce, *The Letter of Tansar* (Rome, 1968), 16, 47).

10. See Boyce, *Sacred Fires*, 56, n. 26.

11. Among the high officials of the Sasanian empire were both a secretary of the accounts of the state-supported fires and one for the private foundations; see J. P. de Menasce, *Feux et fondations*, 62; see also A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2d ed. (Copenhagen, 1943), 135. M. Boyce, "On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of the Fire," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975): 464, speaks of an energetic "drive" of the Sasanians to increase the number of sacred fires.

12. Taitt.Samh. 2.2.5.6–7; W. Caland, *Altindische Zauberei, Darstellung der altindischen Wunschopfer* (Amsterdam, 1908), no. 31; see also A. Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie*, 2d ed. (Breslau, 1927) 1: 124, 131.

13. J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 49.

14. Śat.Br. 5.3.1.12: *tān svān anapakramiṇaḥ kurute*.

15. Śat.Br. 5.3.2.2.

16. This ritual has recently attracted much attention; see H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* (Vienna, 1982); T. F. Moody, *The Agnyādheya: Establishment of the Sacred Fires* (PhD. diss., McMaster University, 1980); M. Sparreboom and J. C. Heesterman, *The Ritual of Setting Up the Sacrificial Fires according to the Vādhūla School* (Vienna, 1989).

17. See ĀpŚS. 5.4.15 f.; Krick, *Feuergründung*, 267 and n. 658.

18. On the *odana* in general see J. Gonda, *The Savayajñas* (Amsterdam, 1965), 55–60.

19. See ĀpŚS. 20.2.4–6, 23.8–9; Krick, *Feuergründung*, 237.

20. See J. C. Heesterman, “Veda and Society,” *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki) 50 (1981): 56–90. See also sec. 7.1 below.

21. Taitt.Samh. 1.7.1.4; see also 1.7.2.1; Śat.Br. 1.7.4.19, 8.1.16. Originally the “tearing asunder” or “cutting” may have referred to the division of the parts of the victim among the participants in the meal; see also sec. 5.4 below.

22. Śat.Br. 2.1.4.4.

23. Maitr.Samh. 1.6.12:105.12. See also Kāth.Samh. 7.15:79.4; Taitt.Br. 1.1.9.1–4.

24. Taitt.Br. 1.1.9.4.

25. Maitr.Samh. 1.6.12:105.12. See also Kāth.Samh. 7.15:79.4; Taitt.Br. 1.1.9.7.

26. ĀpŚS. 5.19.2–20.3.

27. On the form of the *vedi* see Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 15 above), 109. Another association of Aditi with the fire is to be found in the mantras for the fashioning of the fire pot (*ukhā*) in which the fire that is later to be placed on the brick altar (*agnicayana* ritual) is to be kept: “Let Aditi fashion the pot. . . . Let her bear Agni in her womb as a mother a child in her lap” (Taitt.Samh. 4.1.5.3). See also: “In thy lap, o Aditi, I place Agni, food-eater for the eating of food” (Taitt.Samh. 1.5.3.1).

28. Atharvaveda Samh. 11.1.1.

29. Kauś.S. 60.19. The churning is an alternative for the already-available domestic (*aupāsana*) fire (60.5). Equally the *brahmaudana* fire in the *agnyādheya* may be a churned fire (see sec. 3.3 (end) below).

30. See W. Caland, *Altindisches Zauberritual* (Amsterdam, 1900), vi, 11 n. 8.

31. It may be noted in passing that the effective part of the remainder is not the *odana* but the ghee liberally poured over it. In most texts we see the ghee being stressed, while the verses that accompany the three fuel sticks being put on the fire also prominently mention the *ghṛta*, not the *odana*. In spite of the Aditi theme and

its emphasis on the *odana* remainder eaten by her, it would seem on the contrary to be the remainder of the ghee that is the important element. This is illustrated by another *odana* served to four brahmins at the end of *agnicayana* ritual, when the fire has been installed on the brick altar. After a liberal libation of ghee in this fire (the *vasordhāra*, “stream of wealth”) an *odana* is prepared in the remaining ghee and served to four brahmins (ĀpŚS. 17.17.10). Thereby, we are told, Agni Vaiśvanara, “common to all men,” is placed in his own abode, the brahmins representing this form of Agni (Taitt.Saṃh. 5.7.3.4.). Here the link of fire and *odana* is the ghee left after the libation. Moreover, we observe that the *odana* does not produce the fire. At best it can be viewed as feeding the digestive fire of the four brahmin consumers. But it has nothing to do with generating the fire. Rather it is a solemn communal meal celebrating the fire “common to all men” once it has been installed.

32. ĀpŚS. 5.17.4.

33. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.12:105.7–11. See also Kāth.Saṃh. 7.15:79.7–10; Taitt.Br. 1.1.9.8.

34. On Purūravas and Urvaśī, see Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 15 above), 213. For Agni’s instant birth see, e.g., Ṛgveda 3.29.3.

35. Taitt.Br. 1.1.9.9.

36. See n. 22 above.

37. Śat.Br. 3.1.3.2–5 has the myth of Aditi and her rice mess in another context to explain a *caru* (the *śrauta* counterpart of the *odana*) as part of the *īṣṭi* that is connected with the consecration (*dīkṣā*) of the sacrificer starting out on the soma ritual.

38. See M. B. Emeneau, “The Strangling Fig Tree in Sanskrit Literature,” *University of California Publications in Classical Philology* 13 (1949): 345–70. The idea of the *aśvattha* as the carrier of the fire is expressed in the Kāthaka version of the Purūravas and Urvaśī myth. Purūravas, before entering the village, hangs the pot containing the fire he obtained from his “in-laws” the Gandharvas (Urvaśī’s relatives) in an *aśvattha* tree. Coming back to take the fire he finds the top of the tree alight. He then understands that “this [tree] is truly that fire” (Kāth.Saṃh. 8.10:94.19).

39. See Krick, *Feuergründung*, 277 n. 693, who tentatively comes to the same conclusion.

40. In accordance with their view of the ritual as a closed set of acts and mantras cut off from mundane life the ritualists have a natural preference for serried sequences without intervals. Thus Kāth.Saṃh. 8.8:92.12 rejects the yearlong interval between the *ādāna* and the “body offerings” of Agni (*tanūhaviṃśi*). These offerings should immediately follow the *ādāna* “to avoid looseness, to join them with their origin” (*āsithilatvāya, sayonitvāya*).

41. Śat.Br. 2.1.4.6. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.12:95.15 appears to voice a similar doubt. “They discuss whether the fire should be set up or not the next morning by the sacrificer (*ādhyāyamāna*); [the answer is] it should be set up, for he who is without [properly set-up] fire is without sacrifice; a he-goat, bound [nearby], stays [there] during that night; the he-goat is something possessed of the glow of the fire; just so he sets up that fire [next morning].” The he-goat, then, staying during the night

near the *brāhmaudanika* fire represents the fire that is to be set up the next morning but is still in abeyance. Krick, *Feuergründung*, 275, takes the question to refer to the *brāhmaudanika*, but the sequel clearly points to the *gārhapatya* that is to be set up next morning. The question raised by the Kāthaka is the same as Bhāllaveya's point but receives a different answer—the new fire must be properly set up—an operation in which the he-goat has a decisive part (cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.4:92.10; also sec. 3.9 [end] below).

42. ĀpŚS. 5.4.14; VaikhŚS. 1.5:7.1; MānŚS. 1.5.1.14; KātyŚS. 4.7.14. BaudhŚS. 2.12:54.15 has the *brāhmaudanika* fire taken from an *ambariṣa* or *uttapaniṣa* fire (the *ambariṣa* or frying pan would seem to refer to the heating of such a pan filled with light combustibles; the *uttapana* method is described as setting fire to a handful of darbha grass by means of a red-hot potsherd; see also Krick, *Feuergründung*, 241). This method is also given by VaikhŚS. as a third possibility; KātyŚS. also mentions this method and further offers the alternatives of taking the *brāhmaudanika* from a *vaiśya*'s place or from a communal kitchen (*mahānasa*?). Generally speaking, these alternative methods are the same as those for obtaining the domestic fire. As we already saw, the *brāhmaudanika* is a domestic fire, and setting it up is closely akin to establishing a new household or moving to a new place. It is interesting that the same methods obtain for the closely related southern cooking fire (*dakṣiṇāgni*), which still shows its domestic origins. See sec. 4.7 and chap. 4, n. 116.

43. Śat.Br. 2.1.2.7.

44. For the sacrificer's suprahuman state see Śat.Br. 1.1.1.6, 9.3.23.

45. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.8–10. We find here a prefiguration of the *ātman* speculation, which is here directly connected with the (sacrificial) fire.

46. Ibid. 12–13. The gods properly establish the fire (*ā-dhā-*), while the asuras simply put it down (*ni-dhā-*).

47. See n. 18 above.

48. ĀpŚS. 20.23.8. Interestingly, instead of the twelve *odanas* twelve *iṣṭis* may be performed. The alternative illustrates the *iṣṭi* as a *śrauta* counterpart of the *odana*. Āpastamba, however, rejects the alternative and holds on to the *odana*.

49. See n. 42 above.

50. Thus, e.g., Viṣṇusmṛti 71.32 forbids throwing impure substances into the fire (such as blood); a brahmin in a state of impurity should not touch the fire (Manu 4.142). We are, however, not told whether or how the fire should be purified. Rather it would seem not so much that the fire is impaired as is the person causing the defilement. For the notion of the *śrauta* fire being in need of a yearly renewal and purification, see Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.7.3 (see sec. 4.1 below). However, defilement and purification of the fire do not seem to play an important role.

51. In the soma ritual, one may bring to the place of sacrifice the fire drill that symbolically contains the *śrauta* fire, instead of live fire (W. Caland and V. Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma* (Paris, 1906), no. 12). For the concluding *iṣṭi* of the soma ritual one settles on another place of sacrifice after having made the fires "mount" the fire drill to be drilled anew on the new place of sacrifice (*L'Agniṣṭoma*, no. 259).

52. F. M. Kotwal, "Some Observations on the History of the Parsi *Dar-i Mibr*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 37 (1974): 665.

53. For the domestic fire see Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya Sūtra (hereafter ĀśvGS.) 1.9.2; HirGS. 1.22.3; ĀpGS. 5.14; for the *gārhapatya*, ĀpŚS. 6.2.13.

54. See n. 51 above.

55. B. K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 1989), 154–60, interestingly stresses the strong relationship between the wife and the domestic ritual. See also J. C. Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” in *Agni*, ed. J. F. Staal (Berkeley, Calif., 1982), 2:79–81.

56. KhādGS. 1.5.3; GobhGS. 1.1.18.

57. See Śat.Br. 11.5.1.15–17; Atharvaveda Par. 22.3.5–4.1. See also Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” 93.

58. See sec. 4.8.

59. See ĀpŚS. 9.9.1–10.9; ĀpGS. 5.15; HirGS. 1.22.4.

60. See ĀpŚS. 6.28.8–14; ŚāṅkhGS. 5.1.1; HirGS. 1.26.12; KauśS. 40.11.13.

61. See n. 42 above.

62. Modi, *Religious Customs* (n. 6 above), 224.

63. See ĀpŚS. 6.28.10–11.

64. Taitt.Samh. 3.4.10.5.

65. For these mantras see J. Gonda, *The Mantras of the Agnyupasthāna and the Sautrāmaṇi* (Amsterdam, 1980). For the *agnyupasthāna* in general see P. E. Dumont, *L’Agnihotra* (Baltimore, 1939).

66. For the *agnyupasthāna*’s optional nature as sequel to the *agnihotra* see ĀpŚS. 6.19.4.

67. See ĀpŚS. 6.19.4.

68. Maitr.Samh. 1.5.12:81.13.

69. MānŚS. 1.6.2.4.

70. Taitt.Samh. 1.5.9.6; Maitr.Samh. 1.5.12:81.1; Śat.Br. 2.3.4.4.

71. ĀpŚS. 6.16.9.

72. H. Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda*, 3d ed. (Berlin, 1923), 437.

73. See GobhGS. 1.1.22.

74. See MānGS. 2.1.5–6; KāthGS. 45.5.

75. Taitt.Samh. 2.6.6.1–2; 6.2.8.4–6; Maitr.Samh. 3.8.6:102.10; Kāth.Samh. 25.7:111.8; Śat.Br. 1.2.3.1; 1.3.3.13–17; Jaim.Br. 2.41. See Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 15 above), 547–61.

76. Krick, *Feuergründung*, 548 n. 1490, 551, views this mythological motif, in my opinion plausibly, in terms of a periodic contest for the *hotṛ* position of leadership, the *hotṛ* being originally the sacrificer. See sec. 4.7 below.

77. See *ibid.*, 111, for the *vedi* as originating in both grass seat and offering furrow. Also the *anvāhārya* rice mess served to the brahmin officiants—the “human gods”—at the *īṣṭi* is put on the *vedi* before it is removed outside the ritual enclosure (see A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* [Jena, 1880], 134).

78. Herodotus, *Historiae* 1:132, quoted in Boyce, *History* (n. 5 above), 2:180.

79. See sec. 3.3 above.

80. ĀpŚS. 5.5.8; HirŚS. 3.2:301; BaudhŚS. 2.14:56.8; VaikhŚS. 1.5:7.10;



Vādhūla Sūtra (hereafter VādhS.) 1.1.2.6 (only BhārŚS. 5.3.9 does not have the alternative).

81. MānŚS. 1.5.2.16; VārŚS. 1.4.1.6.

82. See ĀsvGS. 1.1.2; ŚāṅkhGS. 1.5.1,10.7; PārGS. 1.4.1. For the brahmin as Agni Vaiśvānara, receiving as such the *odana* food, see Taitt.Saṃh. 5.7.3.4.

83. See ĀpŚS. 3.2.11, 3.9; 4.10.8, 13.9. See also Hillebrandt, *Neu- und Vollmondsopfer*, 128; Heesterman, “Veda and Society” (n. 19 above), 63 n. 10.

84. See sec. 1.4 above.

85. KauśS. 60.5–10; 67.20–22.

86. For the *āyatantra* see Caland, *Zauberritual* (n. 30 above), vi.

87. See Pāraskara Grhya Sūtra (hereafter PārGS.) 1.2.9. Put differently, in this case no differentiation between *śrauta* and *grhya* ritual is called for. The *īṣṭi* of the “solemn” *agnyādhēya* could easily be integrated with the domestic *brahmaudana* as a standard *pākayajña* (itself modeled on the *īṣṭi*).

88. Śat.Br. 2.1.4.5–6; see sec. 3.3, above.

89. ĀpŚS. 5.22.1–5.

90. The eating is, of course, meant to take place after the ritual’s conclusion, as is specified by MānŚS. 1.5.6.9.

91. MānŚS. 1.6.6.10–12.

92. See ĀpŚS. 5.7.7, 11, 12, 15. See also sec. 4.3 below.

93. Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 15 above), 260 n. 644. The original victim appears to be the same as the he-goat held ready (but sacrificed only three days later on the eve of the soma sacrifice) at the arrival of the soma at the *śālā* (310 nn. 810, 812; see also J. C. Heesterman, “La réception du ‘roi Soma,’” in Blondeau - K. Schipper, *Essais sur le rituel*, vol. 3, ed. A. M. Blondeau and K. Schipper [Louvain and Paris, 1993]). See also sec. 7.7 and chap. 7, n. 85 below.

94. ĀpŚS. 7.28.6–8; Śat.Br. 11.7.1.3.

95. For such meat messes see GobhGS. 4.2.6, 12 (*aṣṭakā* sacrifice); 4.7.27–41 (house-building sacrifice); ŚāṅkhŚS. 4.18.10 (*Śūlagava* animal sacrifice). See also W. Caland, *Der altindische Ahnenkult* (Leiden, 1893), 29, 168. See secs. 7.3–4 below.

96. See sec. 4.7 below.

## Chapter Four

1. See ĀpŚS. 5.7.7.

2. See W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), 61. See also J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* (New York, 1976).

3. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.7.3. Cf. Kāṭh.Saṃh. 7.4:66.7; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.5.6:74.12. The renewal theme is also mentioned in connection with the so-called *sarparājñī* verses recited over the newly kindled *gārhapatya* fire. By reciting these verses the snakes renewed themselves by stripping off their worn-out skin. In the same way the fire, (re-)established as the *gārhapatya*, is said to be renewed (Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.4.1).

However, these verses do not refer to the snakes stripping off their skin or to any other form of renewal. On the yearly worship of the fire see sec. 3.7 above.

4. See ĀpŚS. 5.29.11–14. Significantly, the Taittirīya Saṃhitā only knows the *punarādhēya*, the first *ādhāna* being relegated to the (later) Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa. The Saṃhitā appears to know the *ādhāna* mainly as a repetitive ritual. In this connection it should also be mentioned that according to the Taitt.Br. 1.1.2.8 the *agnyādhēya* is to take place on the first day of the new year. Even though ostensibly meant as a once-and-for-all ritual, this suggests an original yearly feast. See J. C. Heesterman, “Other Folk’s Fire,” in *Agni*, ed. J. F. Staal (Berkeley, Calif., 1983), 2:88.

5. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.1.4; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.7.2:110.7; Kāth.Saṃh. 8.15:98.15. Cf. ĀpŚS. 5.26.3.

6. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.2.1,5; Kāth.Saṃh. 9.7:105:15; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.7.5:113.13. See also sec. 4.7 below.

7. Śat.Br. 11.7.1–2.

8. Śat.Br. 11.7.1.3; cf. ĀpŚS. 7.28.8. The period prescribed for this animal sacrifice, “when fodder is abundant” (*suyavase*, Śat.Br. 11.7.1.1), fits in with the rainy season, the time for the *punarādhēya* (see Śat.Br. 2.2.3.7; H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* [Vienna, 1982], 514).

9. See M. Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968): 65 (also 55). Obviously maintaining a large number of purified and consecrated fires would create serious financial problems. Uniting consecrated fires, especially when of different rank, is problematic (see Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires,” n. 96 but cf. p. 55: “The Parsis have never yet united Fires,” as opposed to their Irānī brethren; cf. also “The Fire-Temples of Kerman,” *Acta Orientalia* 30 [1966]: 63). But one may then bring the purified and consecrated fire to a temple there to grow cold in a separate room.

10. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.9:92.15. Cf. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.13 for the asura way of using the fire (see sec. 3.4 above.).

11. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.9:93.2.

12. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.7.3.

13. See n. 6 above.

14. See Śat.Br. 2.2.2.8, Agni being the only one among both devas and asuras to have been immortal from the beginning. See also sec. 4.8 below.

15. See M. Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of Fire,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 95 (1975): 460, quoting Diodorus Siculus (17.114).

16. See R. N. Frye, “The Political History of Iran under the Sasanians,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. E. Yarshater (Cambridge, 1983), 3:118; V. G. Lukonin, “Political, Social, and Administrative Institutions,” in *Cambridge History of Iran*, (Cambridge, 1983), 3:695.

17. See KāthGS. 45.5; MānGS. 2.1.5. See Krick, *Feuergründung*, 351.

18. BaudhŚS. 2.8–11. See Krick, *Feuergründung*, 68–83.

19. Krick, *Feuergründung*, 366, 471, 534.

20. See chap. 4.7 below.
21. KāthGS. 47.1; MānGS. 2.1.1. See W. Caland, *Die Altindischen Todten- und Bestattungsgebräuche* (Amsterdam, 1896), 114; see also Krick, *Feuergründung*, 352 n. 954.
22. See chap. 3.6 above. Of course, we should not overlook the characteristically ritualistic ambiguity: the fire drilled from the *araṇis* in the *agnyādheya* ritual *is* and *is not* the same fire as before. But then it is not the drilling as such—notwithstanding the symbolizing emphasis on birth—that gives the fire its particular quality but the special ritual acts and utterances.
23. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.9:93.8; Śat.Br. 2.2.1.14.
24. See Kāth.Saṃh. 8.2:85.7. On these *sambhāras* see ĀpŚS. 5.1.4–3.1.
25. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.2.8.4–5; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.8.5:101.3–6; Kāth.Saṃh. 25.6:110.19. The tuft of hair from the brow of a he-goat recalls the cutting and throwing in the fire of a similar tuft of hair of the animal victim in Greek sacrifice, before it is immolated (Burkert, *Greek Religion* [n. 2 above], 56. The he-goat whose hair tuft is put on the hearth may originally well have been a sacrificial victim (like the he-goat immolated on the eve of the soma ritual).
26. Taitt.Saṃh. 4.1.2.2; Maitr.Saṃh. 2.7.2:75.9; Kāth.Saṃh. 16.1:221.18; Vāj.Saṃh. 11.16. For the ritual see BaudhŚS. 10.2:2.10; cf. ĀpŚS. 16.2.6, 3.13.
27. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.9:93.7.
28. See J. Gonda, *The Savayajñas* (Amsterdam, 1965), 224; J. C. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 55.
29. See Taitt.Saṃh. 4.2.4b: “you are the fire’s ashes (*bhasma*), the fire’s *purīṣa*” (when spreading sand on the place where the brick hearth of the *gārhapatya* fire is to be built in the *agnicayana* ritual; ĀpŚS. 16.14.1). Interestingly the ashes cleared from the pot (*ukhā*) in which the fire is kept during the year preceding the building of the brick altar can be used in mixing them with the *purīṣa* of the bricks (ĀpŚS. 16.13.2).
30. Śat.Br. 2.3.2.3.
31. See n. 9 above.
32. See ĀpŚS. 21.2.12–15.
33. See ĀpŚS. 9.4.2; see chap. 2.2 above.
34. Taitt.Br. 3.7.3.5; Śat.Br. 12.4.4.2–5; Ait.Br. 7.6.3; cf. ĀpŚS. 9.3.18.
35. Taitt.Saṃh. 5.2.4.1. Cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.2.3:19.11; Kāth.Saṃh. 20.1:19.18; Śat.Br. 7.1.1.38. For the ritual see ĀpŚS. 16.15.5.
36. Śat.Br. 2.1.1.3. Cf. Taitt.Br. 1.2.2.5, where the gods are said to be unable to manage sacrifice until they “collect” it in sufficient quantity.
37. Śat.Br. 2.1.1.14; cf. ĀpŚS. 5.1.6 (referring to the White Yajurveda) and again in the *punarādheya*, 5.27.7. The reason given by the Śatapatha for scrapping the earth *sambhāras* is that the earth on which the fire is set up does already provide the benefits of the *sambhāras*. The Black Yajurveda, which leaves them out for the *punarādheya*, argues that they have already been collected once (Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.2.4; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.7.2:110.10; Kāth.Saṃh. 7.15:98.18).

38. Generally speaking, the rhythm of sacrifice is characterized by concentration and dispersal, “from boom to bust and boom again”; see J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 224.

39. ĀpŚS. 5.18.1, following Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.7:97.5 (cf. MānŚS. 1.5.4.20). The Maitr.Saṃh. suggests that the coming together of the fires may not be with friendly intent: “The fires that are in the three worlds come together, [with the intention] ‘let us take his [the sacrificer’s] goods’” (*asya draviṇam ādadāmahā iti*).

40. Ṛgveda 5.11.4 b.

41. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.4:91.18.

42. See sec. 3.2 and chap. 3, n. 13 above.

43. Taitt.Br. 1.1.5.7–8.

44. Kaṭh.Saṃh. 9.1:104; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.7.3:112.2; Taitt.Br. 1.3.1.4,6 (cf. ĀpŚS. 5.28.6–8; MānŚS. 5.1.2.6; ŚāṅkhŚS. 2.5.10 f). Incidentally, the *vibhaktis* strikingly illustrate the intimate connection of grammar with ritualistic thought.

45. See sec. 3.8 and chap. 3, n. 91 above.

46. ĀpŚS. 5.7.6.

47. See sec. 4.1 above.

48. ĀpŚS. 5.27.4.

49. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.2.5.5. Cf. W. Caland, *Altindische Zauberei (Wunschopfer)* (Amsterdam, 1908), no. 93.

50. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.5.2.3; cf. ĀpŚS. 5.28.5.

51. Śat.Br. 6.8.1.1. See J. C. Heesterman, “Opferwildniss und Ritual-Ordnung,” in *Epiphanie des Heils*, ed. G. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1982), 13–25, esp. 15.

52. Taitt.Saṃh. 5.2.1.7. On the *yāyāvara* and his counterpart the *kṣemya*, in the younger texts better known as the *śālīna*, characterized by the *śālā* or “hall,” see ĀpŚS. 5.4.22. See also Krick, *Feuergründung*, 257 n. 636. See also Heesterman, “Opferwilderniss und Ritual-Ordnung,” and “Householder and Wanderer,” in Madan, *Way of Life: Essays in Honour of Louis Dumont*, ed. T. N. Madan (New Delhi, 1982), 251–71. The opposition is still reflected in the *agnyādheya*—which in its fully elaborated classical form is meant for the sedentary householder to set himself up as a lordly soma sacrificer—when it is ruled that the *śālīna* should leave his home to establish the *śrauta* fires (or rather the *brāhmaudanika* fire as a first step), while the *yāyāvara* need not do so (since he is anyway on the move). But to level down the opposition and equalize the procedure, it is then ruled that the *yāyāvara* may also make a day’s journey when going to perform the *agnyādheya* (see ĀpŚS. 5.3.22). At any rate, mobility appears to characterize the underlying pattern. See also nn. 69, 71, 72 below.

53. Taitt.Br. 1.8.4.1. See W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 15; Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 209–11.

54. See Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft*, 51–54.

55. Ait.Br. 7.1.1.4–5. In general see Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft*, 59.

56. Taitt.Br. 1.7.3.8.

57. Śat.Br. 1.4.1.14–17. See sec. 1.8 above.
58. Mahāvagga 1.15.1–22.13. Cf. Mahāvasta 426:4–434:7.
59. Ibid. 1.19.1.
60. See n. 46 above.
61. See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 61, 92.
62. See G. Dumézil, *Fêtes romaines* (Paris, 1975), 61, and *La religion romaine archaïque* (Paris, 1966), chap. 2, esp. p. 311.
63. See Boyce, “Sacred Fires” (n. 9 above), 56. Originally the Zoroastrians’ fire was as mobile as its Vedic counterpart. The fire temple, as argued by S. Wikander (*Feuerpriester in Kleinasien* [Lund, 1946]) and Boyce (“On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult of the Fire,” *Journ. Am. Or. Soc.* 95 [1975]: 455, “Iconoclasm among the Zoroastrians,” in *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*, vol. 12, ed. J. Neusner [Leiden, 1975], 98, and *History of Zoroastrianism* [Leiden, 1982], 2:221), dates from the fourth century B.C.
64. For the permanence of the liturgical fire in the worship room (*yazishmagāh*), see J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), 318.
65. See sec. 3.5 and chap. 3, n. 52 above.
66. See G. Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Wiesbaden, 1965) 132, 273; Boyce, “On the Zoroastrian Temple Cult,” 459. The same is reported about the kings of Sparta (L. M. R. Simons, *Flamma Aeterna* [Utrecht, 1949], 79–81) and of the Roman emperors (F. Cumont, *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römischen Heidentum* [Darmstadt, 1972], 126).
67. See the mantra: “This Fire should create room for us; this Fire should go in front crushing the enemies; impetuously this [Fire] should conquer the enemies; this [Fire] should win the prizes in the contest” (Taitt.Saṃh. 1.3.3.c; cf. ĀpŚS. 11.17.3).
68. Kāth.Saṃh. 26.2:123.17. Cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.1:112.4; see also 3.8.7:104.10.
69. For the *havirdhāna* carts being moved to the east see ĀpŚS. 11.6.3–7.3; W. Caland and V. Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (Paris, 1906), nos. 87a–c. The carrying forward of fire and soma (*agnīṣomapranayana*)—which takes place later—is detailed in ĀpŚS. 11.17.1; Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 106c. Yet, at the carrying forward of fire and soma there still is a reminiscence of a trek with carts (note that this is plural) as appears from Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.2.3. Interestingly ĀpŚS. 11.17.1, quoting the Saṃhitā, reserves the carting caravan for a moving about *yāyāvāra* (see n. 52 above). The original trek seems to have been reduced to a single cart that has been equalized with the cart that holds the rice or grain for the offerings in a standard *iṣṭi*. According to the *iṣṭi* ritual this cart is placed behind (to the west of) the *gārhapatya*. When the move to the *mahāvedi* is made, the old *āhavanīya* hearth (now called *śālāmukhiya*) takes over the function of the *gārhapatya*. It is then logical to move the cart holding the rice or grain for the cake offerings to the new *gārhapatya*. This single *havirdhāna* cart could easily be viewed as standing for the whole trek of which it had in fact originally been part. However, it no longer conveys the fire and

the soma (as well as the other goods) to the *mahāvedi* but remains at the *śālāmu-khīya*. The two other *havīrdhāna* carts have already been moved, before the *agniṣo-mapraṇayana*, to the *mahāvedi*.

70. See Caland and Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma*, no. 12. The sacrificer may, of course, bring live fire, and in case he is a wealthy magnate (*gataśrī*) he should be expected to do so since he should permanently maintain not only the *gārhapatya* but the other *śrauta* fires as well (see ĀpŚS. 6.3.12–14). However, the *araṇis* are here being specifically prescribed (see BaudhŚS. 6.1:156.16).

71. See Caland and Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma*, no. 24; ĀpŚS. 10.19.7. Originally, the *adhyaśasāna* on the actual place of sacrifice was to take place later, after the *dīkṣā*, at the time of the *prāyaṇīyā* or introductory (literally “setting-out”) *īṣṭi*; see W. Caland ad ĀpŚS. 10.3.3 (cf. 10.19.15; BaudhŚS. 10.9:166.5). We then have a more coherent scheme: *dīkṣā*, setting out (*prayāṇa*), settling down on the actual place of sacrifice. Baudhāyana even prescribes a going out to undertake the *dīkṣā* (BaudhŚS. 6.1:156.16, “having taken up the fires in the *araṇis* he goes to the *śālā*”). Possibly the alternative of a *prayāṇa* to the eventual place of sacrifice was originally connected with the contrast between the settled magnate (*śālīna*) and the mobile *yāyāvara* (see n. 52 above). However, the thrust of the classical system is directed at concentrating the ritual in a single place (see below). It, therefore, became difficult to explain the *prayāṇa* for which no other reason (if any) is given than an unspecified insecurity (*ayogakṣema*; see BaudhŚS. 6.9:165.8). In the same way the ritualists had difficulties in explaining the repeated setting up of the fires.

72. See Caland and Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma*, no. 24. There seem to be two schemes. Either the sacrificer remains in his place (like the *āśvamedha* sacrificer who sends out an armed guard on a conquering circuit with the freely roaming horse), or he goes out himself on a booty-winning tour. Possibly we see here again the contrast of the *śālīna* and the *yāyāvara*. See also sec. 6.2 below.

73. See *ibid.*, no. 31. See also J. C. Heesterman, “Somakuh und Danaergabe,” *XXIII Deutscher Orientalistentag* (Würzburg, Sept. 16–20, 1985), (Stuttgart, 1989), 349–57.

74. See the mantra (Taitt.Samh. 1.2.5c) for pouring ghee on the soma cow's hoofprint: “I pour thee on the head of the earth, on the place of sacrifice, on the ghee-dripping footprint of Idā (*idāyāh pade ghṛtavati*).” For the ghee-dripping footprint of the Idā cow see also Manu's riddle challenge, sec. 1.8.

75. See n. 71 above.

76. This does not mean that the independent animal sacrifice (*nirūḍha paśu-bandha*) would be sedentary in origin. In the first place its ritual can be seen to have been extracted from the soma complex. Moreover, the measurements of its *mahāvedi* are derived from the axle, the pole, and the yoke of the chariot (ĀpŚS. 7.3.7; cf. sec. 2.9 and chap. 2, n. 144). In this way the *mahāvedi* is a representation of the chariot—a feature that clearly suggests mobility. Baudhāyana's additional rules (*karmāntasūtra*) even prescribe a setting out to the place of sacrifice either with live fires or with the *araṇis* (BaudhŚS. 24.34:220.13, 221.6). *Paśubandha* and *Soma-yāga* equally share in the opposition of sedentary and mobile.

77. In this respect it is significant that according to the *agnyādheya* rules the

*āhavanīya* hearth may be at an unlimited (*aparimita*) distance from the *gārhapatya* (Maitr.Samh. 1.6.10:102.4; Kāth.Samh. 8.3:85.19; cf. ĀpŚS. 5.4.4). Here we may also recall the dictum, “in the settled village one undertakes the *dīksā*, in the wilds one performs the [soma] sacrifice” (*grāme dīksate, ’raṇye yajate*; see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniśtoma*, no. 24, n. 1).

78. See ĀpŚS. 13.12.4–13.15; Pañc.Br. 25.10–13; Jaim.Br. 2.277–9 (*Auswahl*, no. 156).

79. LāṭyŚS. 10.15.1, however, draws the *śālā* into the mobile pattern and has it moved up each day, but this is not the general rule.

80. See Heesterman, *Royal Consecration* (n. 38), 173–75.

81. *Ibid.*, 209.

82. Taitt.Samh. 4.2.8a; ĀpŚS. 5.14.4. See sec. 2.5 above.

83. See Krick, *Feuergründung*, 365, 439. For the groupings of three and five, see also D. Knipe, *In the Image of Fire* (Delhi, 1975), 10, who, like Krick (p. 105), views the triad as “vertically” oriented (the three worlds) and the pentad as “horizontal” (center and four directions). Since heaven is in the east, the two schemes easily get amalgamated—hence, the lineal west-east pentad (or, as Knipe puts it, the pentad is both horizontal and vertical).

84. See Kaus.Br. 9.1. The *hotr*’s *dhīṣṇya* is situated on the *pr̥sthyā*, the middle line running from the west to the east (see chap. 2, n. 25).

85. See ĀpŚS. 5.18.2. On the *virāṭkramas* see Krick, *Feuergründung*, 427–39.

86. See Taitt.Br. 1.1.10.2.

87. See Maitr.Br. 1.6.11:103.19; Kāth.Samh. 8.6:90.8. Both passages give only three steps representing three fires—*gārhapatya*, *āhavanīya*, and *sabhya* (or *madhyā-dhīdevanam*), leaving out the southern cooking fire and making no mention of the *sabhya*’s companion, the *āvasathya*.

88. See Heesterman, *Royal Consecration*, 175. It is significant that the *āhavanīya* fire may be used as a cooking fire (instead of the *gārhapatya*), i.e., when the sacrificer’s wife is not present (e.g., when the sacrificer is traveling). The *āhavanīya* is then, in fact, the one and only fire (ĀpŚS. 1.22.1; Śat.Br. 1.1.2.23; KātyŚS. 1.8.35; 2.5.18; cf. A. Hillebrandt, *Neu- und Vollmondopfer* [Jena, 1880], 11 n. 1, 41 n. 1). In this connection also a particular *iṣṭi* (for one who wants the lordship of a village) should be mentioned as consisting of two cakes, one for Agni Vaiśvānara and one for the Maruts. While the Marut cake is prepared on the *gārhapatya*, the one for Agni Vaiśvānara is baked on the *āhavanīya* (see sec. 3.2 and chap. 3, n. 12).

89. See n. 66 above. I should point out that, like Hertha Krick, I was formerly inclined to take *pūrvāgni* to mean the old or previous fire (Krick, *Royal Consecration*, 148). It can, of course, occur in that sense (as, e.g., in Devala’s commentary on KāthGS. 45.1, referring to the fire of the deceased that is given up). In the *śrauta* ritual, however, it invariably refers to the “forward” fire, or the fire that is carried forward, in contradistinction to the fire that stays on the domestic or the *gārhapatya* hearth. I have argued above that the notion of the fire’s renewal or replacement by a fresh one, although it is clearly present, is not so highly profiled as is usually taken for granted. Rather it is a special case of the contrasting phases of what is all the

time the same unchanged fire. Not even the sharp divide between the (domestic) *brāhmaudanika* and the newly drilled *gārhapatya* fire is viewed as a renewal or replacement. The domestic fire is not replaced but continues in the same way that the *brāhmaudanika* may continue as the *dakṣiṇāgni*. The *gr̥hya* and *gārhapatya* fires are parallel but separate, without there being a renewal or rejuvenation. The *pūrvāgni*, then, does not refer to old as against new fire but to the fire in its mobile, “forward” phase as against its static one.

90. See n. 53 above. In this respect the *punarādhēya* corresponds with the *varuṇapraghāsa* sacrifice, which is equally concerned with the return at the end of the hot season (see Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 133–37). For the *punarādhēya* as the counterpart of the *agnyādhēya* after the transhumance and raiding season, see Krick, *Feuergründung*, 534, 579.

91. See M. Sparreboom and J. C. Heesterman, *The Ritual of Setting Up the Sacrificial Fires according to the Vādhūla School* (Vienna, 1989), 130–36.

92. BaudhŚS. 24.7:201.10. See also Krick, *Feuergründung*, 456 n. 1246.

93. KātyŚS. 4.11.15. See H. Krick, *Feuergründung*, 577. This cow sacrifice on the eve of Kātyāyana’s *punarādhēya* should analytically be kept apart from Baudhāyana’s cow sacrifice for the fathers (*gopitryajña*). The latter is an independent funerary sacrifice. As such it will have been connected with the installation of the successor and his fire (cf. KāthGS. 46.1, where such a sacrifice is to take place on the eve of the installation of the successor’s fire; cf. also VādhS. 1.1.1.7, where the problematic connection of the cow sacrifice with the following *agnyādhēya* has been smoothed over). The funerary feast is, however, at the same time a periodical commemorative feast or *śrāddha*. Remolded to suit the *śrauta* frame, the offering of rice balls to the fathers (*pinḍapitryajña*) is regularly made on the eve of the monthly new moon sacrifice. We have, then, a pattern of periodical sacrificial festivities preceded on the eve by a commemorative feast in honor of the fathers. To this pattern, it would seem, belongs the *gopitryajña*. On the other hand there is the soma cycle from which the *agnyādhēya* and *punarādhēya* have been extracted. The he-goat imolated on the eve of the soma sacrifice corresponds with the he-goat kept near the *brāhmaudanika* fire and later given to the *agnīdh* officiant (see sec. 3.8), while the *maitrāvaruṇī* cow at the end of the soma feast is paralleled by a cow sacrifice, equally dedicated to Mitra and Varuṇa, in Kātyāyana’s *punarādhēya*. It seems, however, quite possible that both schemes are realizations of the same basic pattern. Although on the face of it the animal sacrifice in the soma cycle cannot very well be explained as a funerary feast in honor of the fathers, they may still have been originally the same.

94. These texts are Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa, Vaikhānasa Śrautasūtra, and Vādhūla Sūtra. The anomalous place of the *ādhāna* in the texts was also felt by the ritualists to be in need of explanation. Thus Āśvalāyana argues that the first place given to the full and new moon sacrifices is justified because they provide the paradigm for all *īṣṭis* (ĀśvŚS. 1.1.3). This reasoning, however, only holds for the series of *īṣṭis* that forms the second part of the *ādhāna*, after the all-important *brahmaudana* and the actual setting up of the fires. The interesting implication is that from the *śrauta* point of view only the *īṣṭis*, celebrating the newly set up fire, counts—in other



words the “house-warming party,” remolded to fit the *śrauta* format (see sec. 3.8)—irrespective of the elaborate preceding rites (in Āśvalāyana’s view apparently no more than as an appendix of the *īṣṭi* paradigm). For another view see B. K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance Ritual and Religion* (Oxford, 1989), 126, who argues that the texts follow an “epistemological rather than a chronological order.” In general this is true, but in this case it is at variance with the urge of some later texts to start with the *agnyādheya*—an urge that led Āśvalāyana to his attempt to explain its incongruous place. Moreover, the *agnyādheya*, as Smith recognizes, is regularly enumerated as one of the seven prototypes of the *haviryajñas* in its own right and as such holds the first place in the enumeration.

95. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.4.5:52.11; Kāth.Saṃh. 31.15:17.7; Taitt.Saṃh. 1.6.7.1; cf. ĀpŚŚ. 1.1.4. The mantra for making the fire flare up, “Mine be the glory (*varcas*), o Agni, at the rival invocations,” is the first verse of the so-called *vihava* hymn (R̥gveda 10.128; Taitt.Saṃh. 4.7.14; Kāth.Saṃh. 40.10), which is to be recited at a rivaling soma sacrifice (*sāmsava*); cf. ĀpŚŚ. 14.19.10.

96. On appropriating “the gods and the sacrifice” of the rival see Taitt.Saṃh. 2.5.4.2., where an *īṣṭi* is prescribed to follow the new moon sacrifice consisting of a cake for Agni and Viṣṇu, a *caru* for Sarasvatī, and another one for Sarasvat. “By the New Moon sacrifice he hurls a *vajra* at his rival, with the cake for Agni and Viṣṇu he appropriates the gods and the sacrifice of his rival, by [the two *carus* for] Sarasvatī and Sarasvat his paired cattle; as much as is his, all that he appropriates.”

97. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.5.2:81.14. These verses form part of the worship of the fires (*agnyupasthāna*). They are the first four stanzas of the *vihava* hymn (n. 95 above), a verse celebrating Agni and Soma and the invitatory and offering verses of the Agni cake (Agni and Agni-Soma are the deities of the cakes offered in the new moon sacrifice by which as we have seen one “hurls a *vajra* at the rival”). For this part of the *agnyupasthāna* see MānŚŚ. 1.6.2.4; for the touching of the offerings on the *vedi*, ĀpŚŚ. 4.8.6.

98. On the *sabhā* see Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft* (n. 53 above), 75.

99. Summarized by Krick, *Feuergründung*, 326 n. 856.

100. Even though thoroughly ritualized, the dicing contest apparently keeps troubling the ritualists. Thus, Baudhāyana has it at the *gopitryajña*, outside the *śrauta* sphere, while Vādhūla radically cancels it. See also sec. 7.5.

101. Cf. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 4.34.8, where the *odana* is equated with the cow, which “must be for me the cow of all forms, giving the milk of desire.” Also see sec. 3.8 and chap. 3, n. 95 above.

102. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 4.35.7. See also the *odana* at the beginning of the horse sacrifice, which is associated with the license for plunder given to the warriors accompanying the horse on its yearlong circuit. In this instance the *odana* looks like a feast ceremonializing an alliance or *conjunctio* (see BaudhŚŚ. 15.4).

103. KauśS. 60.5. The *senāgni* reminds one of the fire the ancient Persian rulers were wont to have carried before their army (see n. 66 above).

104. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 11.1.3.

105. See sec. 3.3 and chap. 3, n. 33 above.

106. Caland, *Wunschopfer* (n. 49 above), nos. 14–17; Taitt.Saṃh. 2.2.6.1; Maitr.Saṃh. 2.1.2.:2.20–3.9; Kāth.Saṃh. 10.2:127.20.

107. Such is the case according to ĀpGS. 5.15; HirGS. 1.22.4. Cf. KhādhGS. 1.5.3; GobhGS. 1.1.18.

108. See sec. 3.5 and chap. 3, n. 55 above.

109. ŚāṅkhGŚ. 1.1.3; PārGS. 1.2.3; GobhGS. 1.1.15 (which mentions only the vaiśya).

110. See sec. 3, n. 41 above.

111. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.7:28.11,29.1,6; cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.10:34.1; also 4.2.1:22.11 (taking the rival's cattle to one's own cattle pen).

112. See n. 101 above.

113. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.6:28.1. See sec. 1.10, above.

114. Maitr.Saṃh. 4.2.1:23.2; cf. MānŚS. 9.5.5.8.

115. Maitr.Saṃh. 1.6.11:103.5. It is interesting that according to Baudhāyana one goes to fetch the fire for cooking the *brahmaudana* while being “covered, veiled” (*sampracchanna*), i.e., in secret, suggesting a stealing of someone else's fire (BaudhŚS. 2.13: 54.15; see Krick, *Feuergründung*, 85, n. 218).

116. See secs. 3.3 (end), above 3.8, and chap. 3, n. 42.

117. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.12:96.7.

118. Thus the kṣatriya is missing here. The four-varṇa scheme is filled out by ĀpŚS. 5.14.1.

119. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 55.

120. Kāth.Saṃh. 8.12:96.7: *yo brāhmaṇo vā vaiśyo vā puṣṭo 'sura iva syāt*.

121. See sec. 4.1 and n. 6.

122. See sec. 4.4 and n. 51.

123. See sec. 4.2 and n. 35. The brāhmaṇas explain the double kindling as the sacrifice of the primordial Sādhya gods who, having nothing else yet to offer, offered the fire in the fire. Out of this sacrifice the animals (*paśu*) arose (Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.5.1; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.5.: 121.1; Kāth.Saṃh. 26.7:129.19). The fire is indeed viewed as a *paśu* (see sec. 1.6 above). On “l'aspect victime du feu” see also M. Biardeau, *Histoires de Poteaux* (Paris, 1989), 49 (gold—“feu à l'état solide”—is used in a burnt oblation). Apart from its intimate link with cattle, the fire is also connected with man's self, as his “external soul” (see sec. 1.6 and chap. 1, n. 81 above). Offering fire (churned, as it were, out of one's self) in the fire then comes to look like self-sacrifice. This interpretation is not necessarily incompatible with the interpretation presented here (on self-sacrifice see J. C. Heesterman, “Self-Sacrifice in Vedic Ritual,” in *Gilgul, Essays Dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky*, ed. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stroumsa [Leiden, 1987], 91–106).

124. Mahāvagga 1.15.2–7. See sec. 4.4 and n. 58 above.

125. We might think here of Ahi Budhnya, the Serpent of the Deep, who is associated with the fire, especially the domestic or *āvasthya* fire, as well as with the deactivated *gārbhapatyā* when its function is taken over by the *śālāmukhiyā*. See Taitt.Br. 1.1.10.3; ĀpŚS. 5.18.2 and 11.15.1; Ait.Br. 3.36.5.

126. The text appears to make a special point of the Buddha leaving the dragon intact.

127. See sec. 4.2 above.

128. See chap. 2.7 above.

129. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 56.

130. On the *śālina* and the *yāyāvāra* see n. 52 above.

131. See sec. 2.2 and chap. 2, n. 14 above.

132. As we saw, the *dakṣiṇāgni*, derived (when not drilled) from the domestic fire and associated with the rival, is problematic. In this respect it is significant that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa pushes it into the background and speaks consistently of two fires—*gārhapatya* and *āhavanīya*, the only true *śrauta* fires (Śat.Br. 3.2.3.8).

133. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.8 (for a similar passage without mention of the *ātman* see Kāth.Saṃh. 10.7:132.2). Interestingly, a similar statement is made about the *brahman* power. “In the beginning the gods were mortal and only when they had reached [completion] through the *brahman* power—namely by assuming Name and Form, the two manifestations of the *brahman*—they became immortal” (Śat.Br. 11.2.3.6; on this passage see Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, 70. For the fervent (though uncertain) hope to take and keep the immortal fire “in our hearts,” see Taitt.Saṃh. 5.7.9b.

134. The prime example of the fire carried in a pot (*ukhā*) is the *ukhya* fire of the *agnicayana* that is later to be installed on the brick altar. On its maintenance see ĀpŚS. 1.6.13.2–4 (disposal of ashes).

135. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.17. Cf. BaudhŚS. 20.19:42.6, where a repeated third *ādhāna* in the case of the fire having been robbed or lost is stated to be superfluous on the same ground of the fire being safely interiorized by the sacrificer.

136. Manu 1.85–86.

### Chapter Five

1. Śat.Br. 6.8.1.1. See sec. 4.4 and chap. 4, nn. 51, 52 above.

2. Śat.Br. 12.6.1.41. See A. Weber, “Collectanea über ‘Kastenverhältnisse in den Brāhmaṇa und Sūtra,’” *Indische Studien* 10, 35.

3. See, e.g., Ṛgveda 7.33.6.

4. H.-P. Schmidt, *Brhaspati und Indra* (Wiesbaden, 1968), 239.

5. Ṛgveda 10.92.10; 1.83.5.

6. Ibid., 6.15.17; 6.16.13; 10.21.5.

7. Ibid., 8.9.7; 9.11.2.

8. See M. Bloomfield, *The Atharveda* (Strasbourg 1899), 29, 32.

9. Jaim.Br. 3.94 (W. Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 180); cf. Pañc.Br. 13.3.12.

10. More helpful is, perhaps, the Vedic *atharvan*’s association with healing (see Pañc.Br. 12.9.10; 10.21.5; BAUp. 2.6.3), which brings him near to the classical *brahman* officiant (see further below).

11. See M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*

(Heidelberg, 1956) 1:28; E. Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes* (Paris, 1969), 1:281.

12. See, in general, H. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 3d ed. (Stuttgart and Berlin, 1923), 384–96; H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* (Vienna, 1982), 417 n. 1126.

13. See sec. 1.10 and chap. 1, n. 152; on the *hotṛ*'s *dhiṣṇya* see sec. 2.2 and chap. 2, n. 25.

14. Weber, *Indische Studien* 10, 139. See L. Renou, *Études sur le vocabulaire du Rgveda* (Pondichery, 1958), 59.

15. Kauṣ.Br. 12.5; ĀpŚS. 12.17.2 (referring to Kauṣ.Br.). According to Āpastamba's commentator the rule in question—the *hotṛ*'s (in case he is the *yajamāna*) following the sāmaveda chanters to their place in the sadas after the early morning *stotra* that is performed outside the ritual enclosure—refers to the *sattra*. This seems more obvious than it is. In a classical *sattra* all the participants are at the same *yajamāna* and officiant (the various liturgical offices being distributed among the participants). In a *sattra* the *hotṛ* will, therefore, be also *yajamāna*. One wonders, however, why this self-evident rule has to be stated and out of place at that. It is likely a remnant of an older phase, such as is also reflected in the (contradictory) statements regarding the number of participants in the *ahīna*-type soma sacrifice (on the *ahīna* see sec. 6.4 below).

16. GobhGS. 1.9.9.

17. Kauṣ.Br. 9.6; Śat.Br. 9.5.2.16.

18. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.8:127.8; Śat.Br. 3.7.4.9; MānŚS. 2.3.6.17; ĀpŚS. 11.19.8; KātyŚS. 6.4.3; 9.8.15; see J. Schwab, *Das altindische Thieropfer* (Erlangen, 1886), no. 56.

19. Śat.Br. 3.7.4.10.

20. KātyŚS. 6.4.4.

21. Ibid. 5.

22. ĀpŚS. 17.14.7. Cf. Taitt.Saṃh. 5.4.6.4; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.3.7:40.10; Kāth.Saṃh. 21.10:49.20; Śat.Br. 9.2.3.5. For the Apratiratha hymn see Taitt.Saṃh. 4.6.4 (Rgveda 10.103).

23. See sec. 4.6 above.

24. See sec. 4.8 above.

25. ĀpŚS. 7.22.12, 25.9; ŚāṅkhŚS. 5.16.2. For the inviting verses being *bhṛāṭṛyadevatya* see chap. 2.2 above.

26. See J. C. Heesterman, “‘I am who I am’: Truth and Identity in Vedic Ritual,” in *Beiträge zur Hermeneutik*, ed. G. R. F. Oberhammer (Vienna, 1991), 154–61.

27. See Schwab, *Das altindische Thieropfer* (n. 18), 83, 86. In the animal sacrifice there are only two *hautra* officiants, the *hotṛ* and the *maitrāvaruṇa*.

28. *Praśāstr* is also used for the ruler (see Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda* [n. 12], 391 n. 2). The *maitrāvaruṇa* is also called the leader, the *pranetr* of the *hotrakas*.

29. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.7.1; see sec. 1.8 above.

30. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.7.2.

31. Ibid. 4; Śat.Br. 1.8.1.26 (cf. 1.8.1.8).

32. Taitt.Samh. 1.7.1.3.

33. See sec. 1.8.

34. Kāth.Samh. 29.4:172.18; also Maitr.Samh. 4.8.6:114.10; Taitt.Samh. 6.6.7.3. Strictly speaking these passages refer to the “breaking-up” (*udavasānīyā*) *iṣṭi* immediately following and closely related to the cow sacrifice (see n. 35). In the monistic scheme of the single unopposed sacrificer, it was reinterpreted as a *punar-ālambha*, a “taking hold again” to prevent sacrifice from going over to “the one who has not sacrificed.” On sacrifice “going away” and being “taken hold of again,” see sec. 1.9 and chap. 1, n. 146.

35. See chap. 4, n. 93. The *maitrāvaruṇī* cow and *udavasānīyā* fall in the same pattern as the *gopitrīyajña* or *upavasathagavī* preceding the setting up of the fires and the repeated setting up equally preceded by a cow sacrifice (according to KātyŚS.). Interestingly, a connection is suggested between the *maitrāvaruṇī* and the funerary cow sacrifice (Taitt.Samh. 6.6.7.1). Although the text brings the equation to bear on a *caru* for soma concluding the last soma pressing, it is hard not to think here of the *maitrāvaruṇī* sacrifice. We have, moreover, seen that the *caru* is the *śranta* version of the *odana* that can replace a cow (as in the gambling episode).

36. See sec. 2.3. For Mitra and Varuṇa, see also n. 39 below.

37. For the connection of the Iranian Mithra with animal sacrifice, see M. Boyce, “On Mithra’s Part in Zoroastrianism,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 32 (1969): 10–34.

38. Śat.Br. 3.7.4.10; cf. Maitr.Samh. 1.4.2:49.1; Kāth.Samh. 5.5:48.6; 7.3:65.10; ĀpŚS. 11.19.8; MānŚS. 2.3.6.17; KātyŚS. 6.4.3.

39. This may also shed some light on the stereotype invocation of the two *hotṛ*s in the *āpri* hymns that contain the offering verses of the fore offerings of the animal sacrifice (see ĀpŚS. 7.14.6; Schwab, *Das altindische Thieropfer* [n. 18], no. 57). These fore offerings immediately follow the *pravara*, i.e., when the compact has been made and the *hotṛ*s are united (cf. esp. Rgveda 2.3.7, with its repeated stress on the preverb *sam-*, “together,” and its emphasis on unity). Geldner (ad Rgveda 1.13.8) supposes the two *hotṛ*s to be the divine and the human *hotṛ*. The divine *hotṛ*, Agni, is however already invoked in the first *āpri* stanza. Moreover, these hymns are concerned with divine powers, not with their human counterparts. It seems more likely that we should think of Mitra and Varuṇa providing the divine model for the *maitrāvaruṇa* and his compact with the “first” *hotṛ* who represents Agni. For Agni’s relationship with Mitra and Varuṇa see, e.g., Atharvaveda Samh. 13.3.13, where Agni becomes Varuṇa in the evening and Mitra in the morning (see A. Hillebrandt, *Vedische Mythologie* [Breslau, 1927], 2:64; see also F. B. J. Kuiper, *Varuṇa and Vi-dūṣaka* [Amsterdam, 1979], 68). It may be of interest that Night and Day are invoked in the *āpri* stanza preceding the one on the two *hotṛ*s. More generally, it may be recalled that the *hotṛ* function seems to preserve the reminiscence of an internal opposition, the inviting verses (*puronuvākya*) being said to belong to the rival as against the offering verses (*yājyā*), which pertain to the sacrificer.

40. This implies that we have to account for two turning points where the roles are reversed, i.e., at the animal sacrifice on the eve of the soma feast when the *pra-*

*vara* election takes place and again at the *maitrāvaruṇī* sacrifice after the soma feast. At the latter occasion, one is led to surmise, the successful competitor who had taken over as *prasāstr*, giving the orders, will now in his turn be challenged at his own sacrifice by the erstwhile *hotṛ* sacrificer whom he had superseded.

41. As to Agni—or rather his human representative—sharing in the benefits, it is significant that in the *samīṣṭa* formulas at the end of the animal sacrifices he is called on to come and partake of the sacrificial food (Taitt.Saṃh. 1.4.44.d; Ṛgveda 3.29.16). See Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 12), 231 n. 579.

42. On keeping the fires apart see sec. 4.2 above.

43. *Historiae* 1.132.

44. See M. Boyce, “Haoma, Priest of the Sacrifice,” in *In Memoriam W. B. Henning*, ed. M. Boyce-I. Gershevitch (London, 1970), 62–79, esp. 73, 79.

45. On the (limited) activity of the sacrificer in the *śrauta* ritual see ĀpŚS. 4.1.2–3.

46. See secs. 3.4–5 above.

47. ĀpŚS. 21.19.1–2.

48. J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 30, 125.

49. Jaim.Br. 2.279–80; see W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 119.

50. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 42, 150.

51. Kauṣ.Br. 6.11. Cf. Ṣaḍv.Br. 1.6.5.; HirŚS. 10.8:106; BhārŚS. 3.15.6; ĀpŚS. 14.8.3. Cf. also Śat.Br. 5.5.5.16. On silence as the complement of speech in ritual and on the *brahman*’s silence in particular, see L. Renou, “La valeur du silence dans le culte védique,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69 (1949): 11–18 (repr. in L. Renou, *L’Inde fondamentale* [Paris, 1978], 66–80).

52. See, e.g. ĀpŚS. 3.18.8; 14.8.4; Ait.Br. 5.33.3.

53. BaudhŚS. 3.24:96.3–8 delimits the periods of the *brahman*’s silence.

54. See Renou, “La valeur,” 13, who points out that sometimes a rule of silence is given on top of an already-prescribed silence. Such cases are somewhat hard to explain. Probably they are the result of various schemes, superimposed on each other, which aimed at turning the *brahman*’s silence into separate ritual “acts.” At any rate, as Renou observes, they can hardly be explained by the intention to exclude worldly speech.

55. BhārŚS. 3.15.3, 6.

56. Ait.Br. 5.33.2; Śat.Br. 11.5.8.7. For the *brahman* as “guardian” of the sacrifice see, e.g., Śat.Br. 4.3.4.22; 4.6.6.5; 14.1.3.2.

57. On the *brahman* as the *bhīṣaj* of sacrifice see Oldenburg, *Religion des Veda* (n. 12), 394. See also Śat.Br. 14.2.2.19; 11.5.8.6; Ait.Br. 5.34.2; Ṣaḍv.Br. 1.6.5. For the *brahman* performing reparatory rites (*prāyaścitta*) see MānŚS. 1.1.16; ŚāṅkhŚS. 3.21.1.

58. See ĀpŚS. 3.18.9–19.4; 14.9.7–10.1.

59. See VaitS. 1.2–3. ĀpŚS. 5.16.6 assigns the chanting of the *sāmans* at the *agnyādhēya* to the *brahman*, while 17.14.7 has him (or the *maitrāvaruṇa*) recite the

Apratiratha hymn (see n. 22). See also H. W. Bodewitz, “The Fourth Priest,” in *Essays to D. J. Hoens* (Leiden 1983), 33–68, esp. 35 and n. 3.

60. Kauṣ.Br. 6.11. It is to be noted that the Atharvaveda is not mentioned.

61. Śat.Br. 12.1.1.10. See Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 395.

62. ĀpŚS. 11.19.8. For the connection of Indra and *brahman* see sec. 5.5 and n. 88 below.

63. Śat.Br. 4.6.6.5.

64. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 396.

65. L. Renou, “Sur la notion de *brahman*,” *Journal asiatique* 1949, 7–49. (repr. in L. Renou, *L’Inde fondamentale* [Paris, 1978], 83–116). See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 71.

66. Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 72.

67. Śat.Br. 11.5.8.6. Cf. Ait.Br. 5.32.5; Jaim.Br. 1.358; Chānd.Up. 4.17.

68. Śat.Br. 14.2.2.19.

69. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.6.8.3–7. Śat.Br. 1.7.4.1–18 connects the shot from Rudra’s arrow with Prajāpati’s incestuous passion for his daughter. The gods sent Rudra to punish Prajāpati. On Prajāpati’s incest see S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice* (repr. Paris, 1966), 20.

70. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.1.4. See also sec. 3.3.

71. Ibid. 2.6.8.2.

72. Ibid. 1.7.2.1.

73. See W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* (Berkeley, Calif., 1983), 35 and n. 3.

74. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.1.3–4; cf. Śat.Br. 1.8.1.25. For the *āhvāna* see A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (Jena 1880), 125.

75. Pañc.Br. 19.4.2; Jaim.Br. 1.223 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 83); Ait.Br. 4.25.3. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 31.

76. See 5.2 above.

77. Śat.Br. 1.8.1.27 refers her epithet *maitrāvaruṇī* to the flood story. Arisen from Manu’s offering in the receding waters after the flood Idā is claimed by Mitra and Varuṇa, but she turned instead to Manu, the primordial sacrificer, as her father (Śat.Br., 8). The epithet equally refers, however, to the cow sacrificed for Mitra and Varuṇa after the conclusion of the soma sacrifices (see n. 35 above). The claim of Mitra and Varuṇa on Idā and her reverting to Manu suggest a competitive *vihava*. Such a competition may also form the original background of Manu’s riddle challenge—“who can make this in sacrifice?”—taken up by Mitra and Varuṇa, who then indeed “make,” i.e., immolate, her (as the *maitrāvaruṇī* cow); see sec. 1.8. One is reminded here of the opposition between the “first” *hotṛ* and his counterpart the *maitrāvaruṇa* (see sec. 5.2 above).

78. ĀpŚS. 3.20.7; HirŚS. 2.8:260.

79. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 141.

80. See sec. 6.2.

81. Taitt.Samh. 1.7.3.1; cf. Śat.Br. 11.1.8.6.

82. See chap. 7.1 on the ultimate root of *brahman* being the food eaten by brahmins.

83. For the dicing contest see sec. 7.5 below. For the alliance sealed by the shared food see sec. 7.6 (end).

84. It is significant that the animal sacrifice has no separate *prāśitra*.

85. D. Shulman, “Die Integration der hinduistischen Kultur durch die Brahmanen,” in *Max Webers Studie über Hinduismus und Buddhismus*, ed. W. Schluchter (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 104–48, esp. 138–41 (in connection with the mythic warrior-brahmin Paraśurāma).

86. Jaim.Br. 2.1. On the *śreṣṭhin* see Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (n. 49), 74.

87. A case in point is that of Atyarāti Jānamtapi, who received the knowledge of “Indra’s great consecration” (*aindra mahābhiṣeka*) from the brahmin Vāsiṣṭha Sātyahavya and consequently conquered the whole earth. Vāsiṣṭha Sātyahavya then wants to be brought to an exalted condition by his patron—i.e., he wants himself to be made a powerful ruler. Jānamtapi, however, procrastinates by putting up an impossible condition. “When I shall have conquered, o brahmin, the Uttara-Kurus, then you will be king of the earth and I shall be your army commander (*senāpati*).” The land of the Uttara-Kurus, however, is the sacred ground of the gods (*devakṣetra*) and so cannot be conquered by man. Vāsiṣṭha therefore feels deceived. Predictably his king and patron is then defeated by another king (Ait.Br. 8.23.9–11). The moral of the story is, of course, that the kṣatriya should not play false to the brahmin for fear of losing his kingdom. For our purpose, however, the striking point is that the brahmin feels entitled to expect such a reversal of the position as proposed by Jānamtapi, although the condition for the reversal cannot be fulfilled. This may also throw light on the otherwise strange instances in brāhmaṇas and sūtras giving prescriptions for the case that the officiant wants to ruin his patron. These frequently occurring prescriptions seem to be the scattered remnants of a situation in which the reversal of fortune and position is always just around the corner.

88. See n. 62 above. For the *subrahmanyā* formula, which recurs a number of times, see ĀpŚS. 10.28.4; 11.3.14; 11.20.3; 11.21.8; 12.3.15 (see also Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, nos. 37, 49, 107, 108). In the mantra uttered by the *hotṛ* when he takes hold of the *adhvaryu* and the *agnīdh* after his election, Indra is also mentioned as *purohita*. “At the election of the *hotṛ* we take hold of Indra as our *purohita*” (ĀsvŚS. 1.3.27; ŚākhŚS. 1.6.3; see Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* [n. 74], 90).

89. See, e.g., Śat.Br. 4.5.4.8; 5.1.3.4.

90. Cf. Vait.S. 1.7.

91. See chap. 1.9 above.

92. GobhGS. 1.9.8–9. See chap. 5.1 above.

93. See Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 12), 117 n. 307.

94. Kauṣ.Br. 6.11; Ait.Br. 5.33, 34.



95. ĀpŚS. 3.18.2–5; 4.4.2–3. See Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer*, 15.

96. Since in the classical scheme of ritual the *hotṛ* and the other officiants have to be in function already from the start, a separate “election” (*varaṇa*) had to be devised for their installation at the very beginning (see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 6). Incidentally, since the *pravara* is part of the unchangeable *tantra*, it has to be repeated at each *igti* in the course of the soma ritual.

97. Taitt.Br. 3.7.6.1; ĀpŚS. 3.18.2; 4.4.2; HirŚS. 2.8:256; 6.1:509; BhārŚS. 3.14.1; MānŚS. 5.2.15.1; VārŚS. 1.1.5.1; VaitS. 1.17. See also VaikhGS. 1.9:11.4.

98. ŚāṅkhŚS. 4.20.1.

99. Śat.Br. 1.7.4.9.

100. See H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (London, 1964), 23 (but cf. n. 96 on exceptions).

101. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda* (n. 12), 371 n. 2, already pointed this out. He explains the difference by supposing that the sacrificer in contradistinction to the officiants would be in a special, more demanding, position than the officiants. The sacrificer therefore equally needs the concluding bath (*avabhṛtha*). However, the officiants also take part in the *avabhṛtha*.

102. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, nos. 14–18. For a brief summary see Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 397–410.

103. Śat.Br. 3.2.2.27; ĀpŚS. 10.12.9.

104. See the texts quoted by Lévi, *La doctrine* (n. 69), 102–8. See also Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 405.

105. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, nos. 17, 192; Taitt.Samh. 6.1.3.6–7.

106. Gop.Br. 3.2.4.4.

107. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 18; ĀpŚS. 10.11.5.

108. See Śat.Br. 3.2.1.4: “out of the *brahman*, out of the sacrifice.”

109. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 78.

110. BĀUp. 1.4.11.

111. Taitt.Samh. 6.1.4.3; Śat.Br. 3.2.1.40. Cf. however Kāth.Samh. 23.5:80.4; Maitr.Samh. 3.6.9:72.1, where the qualification *brāhmaṇa* is absent (cf. MānŚS. 2.1.2.22).

112. Ait.Br. 7.25.

113. Kauṣ.Br. 7.2; cf. ŚāṅkhŚS. 5.3.7–8 (name and descent not mentioned until *sūktavāka* of the animal sacrifice on the *sutyā* day). Āśvalāyana vacillates (name is mentioned in ĀśvŚS. 1.3.3; 12.15.4; name is withheld in 4.2.7–11).

114. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration* (n. 79), 93, 226; see also 71, 94. See also sec. 6.2 below.

115. Ibid., 115.

116. Ibid., 127–32.

117. See sec. 4.5 and chap. 4, n. 72.

118. Ait.Br. 6.7.5.

Chapter Six

1. See H.-P. Schmidt, “The Origins of *abimsā*,” in *Mélanges . . . Louis Renou* (Paris, 1968), 651; H. Falk, *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel* (Freiburg, 1986), 67.
2. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 11.5.3; Śat.Br. 11.5.4.12 (see P. Horsch, *Die Vedische Gātha- und Śloka-Literatur* [Bern, 1966], 136).
3. Śat.Br. 11.5.4.4. Cf. ŚāṅkhGS. 2.5.1; PārGS 2.3.6.
4. See sec. 4.5 and chap. 4, n. 72 above.
5. Chānd.Up. 4.4.5.
6. In the following episode, where Satyakāma is himself the teacher, his pupil Upakosala receives the revelation from the three sacrificial fires he has faithfully tended for twelve years before being instructed by his teacher.
7. See sec. 4.5.
8. See A. Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur* (Strasbourg, 1897), 58, 60; see also Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 68.
9. ŚāṅkhGS. 2.11.5; see H. Oldenberg *ad* GobhGS. 3.3.16 (*Sacred Books of the East* 30:79) on the “second schoolterm.”
10. MānGS. 1.23; VārGS. 7. For *uddikṣā*, “lifting the [state of] consecration” (MānGS. 1.23.4, 13, 19) cf. *uddikṣaṇika*, a term used in the commentaries for the ceremony at the close of the “schoolyear” (see H. Oldenberg *ad* ŚāṅkhGS. 2.12.1, *Sacred Books of the East* 29:78).
11. For the *rahasya* see P. Rolland, *Le Vārāhagr̥hya sūtra* (Aix-en-Provence, 1971), 167 (*ad* VārGS. 7.17). One may think of such texts as Śat.Br. 14.1–3, dealing with the ritualistic micro-macrocosmic identifications of the *pravargya* ritual. “Studying” the “secret doctrine” or mystery (*rahasya*) of the *pravargya* ritual is introduced by the performance of the ritual itself (MānGS. 1.23.21; VārGS. 7.17). Could not the “study” of the *rahasya* be the same as performing the ritual? After all, the *rahasya* exposition in the Śatapatha does teach the ritual in full detail. There would then be no other mystery than the execution of the ritual as such. The *dikṣā* and the attendant observances and offerings would consequently be the sacrifice itself. Hence the striking likeness of *brahmacārin* or “pupil” and *dikṣita*. In this connection it is also perfectly fitting that the *brahmacārin*, like the *dikṣita*, should be handed *vrata* food (MānGS. 1.23.2, 7, 15; VārGS. 7.3: *vrataṃ pradāya*; cf. W. Caland and V. Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* [Paris, 1906], no. 22).
12. See ĀpŚS. 14.13.1–9.
13. VārGS. 7.13: *aśvamedho vyākhyātah*.
14. MānGS. 6.1.1.5. Cf. ĀpŚS. 16.1.4; 16.8.13; Śat.Br. 6.6.1.4.
15. MānGS. 1.2.3.8; VārGS. 7.6: *triṣavanam udakam āharet trīṃs trīṃ kumbhān*.
16. Respectively, MānGS. 1.1–4 and 1.22–23.
17. MānGS. 1.5 (*antarakalpa*) and 1.6 (*agnipravartana*).
18. The end of the term (*utsarjana*) is detailed in the previous section, MānGS. 1.4.7.

19. For the *avāntaradikṣā* see Caland and Henry, *L'Agniṣṭoma*, no. 50; see also ĀpŚS. 11.1.13.
20. See n. 11 above.
21. See sec. 2.7 and chap. 2, n. 127.
22. Respectively, ĀpŚS. 11.1.13–2.10 (for the end of the *avāntaradikṣā* observances see 11.18.3–9) and 15.20–21.
23. ĀpŚS. 21.11.1–12; see Ait.Br. 5.25.22; Kauṣ.Br. 27.5.
24. Taitt.Br. 2.2.1.4, 6.3; see Ait.Br. 5.23.7, 10.
25. See Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 1), 70, who suggests that the peaceful and submissive *brahmacārin* and the itinerant warrior (the *vṛātya* and his descendent, the *satrin*) represent contrasting seasonal patterns of behavior.
26. See H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* (Vienna, 1982), 579.
27. HirGS. 1.9.31; KhādGS. 3.1.29. See J. C. Heesterman, “The Return of the Veda Scholar,” in *Pratidānam, F. B. J. Kuiper Felicitation Volume* (The Hague, 1968), 436–47, esp. 440.
28. Cf. ĀpŚS. 10.19.6, 14.
29. MānGS. 1.1.6; VārGS. 6.6; KāthGS. 1.15; cf. ĀpŚS. 15.20.18 (concerning the *brahmacārin*’s *avāntaradikṣā*, see n. 22 above).
30. PārGS. 2.8.9.
31. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 11.5.
32. Rather than a sign of poverty or of a gradual elimination of the chariot from the ritual the rule that the *dikṣita* should take a part of the chariot with him would seem to be an attempt to remove the distinction between the lordly chariot owner and the itinerant pedestrian.
33. See sec. 6.5 below.
34. See Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 70.
35. See sec. 2.3 above.
36. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 71, 75–78 (according to the White Yajurveda the announcement takes place at the consecrating soma feast, after the *abhiṣeka* bath).
37. Ibid., 77.
38. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 4.8.1; Taitt.Br. 2.7.1.2; Kāth.Saṃh. 37.9:89.3; cf. ĀpŚS. 22.28.10 (*rājābhiṣeka*).
39. Kāth.Saṃh. 37.5:87.8; Taitt.Br. 2.7.4.1.
40. See sec. 5.4 and chap. 5, n. 79 above.
41. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.2.79; cf. ĀpŚS. 10.27.3.
42. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.1:112.4–8; cf. Kāth.Saṃh. 26.2:123.17, where the eastern direction of the tour of conquest is specified.
43. J. C. Heesterman, “La réception du ‘roi Soma,’” in *Essais sur le rituel*, vol. 3, ed. A.-M. Blondeau and K. Schipper (Louvain and Paris, 1993).
44. For a similar doubling of sacrificer and challenger see the *āhavanīya* fire on the *mahāvedī* to which churned fire is to be added (see sec. 4.8 above).

45. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.7.8:87.7: *agnir mahat samādhayah*.
46. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.7.8:87.8–14. Cf. Kāth.Saṃh. 24.7:97.12–14; Taitt.Saṃh. 6.1.11.6; Śaṭ.Br. 3.3.4.21.
47. See sec. 4.7 above and chap. 4, n. 120.
48. Taitt.Saṃh. 2.5.2.4; cf. ĀpŚS. 4.3.12.
49. Śaṭ.Br. 1.6.3.17.
50. See J. C. Heesterman, “Self-Sacrifice in Vedic Ritual,” in *Gilgud: Essays Dedicated to R. J. Zwi Werblowsky*, ed. S. Shaked, D. Shulman, and G. G. Stroumsa (Leiden, 1987), 91–106. See also sec. 1.8 and chap. 1, n. 110; chap. 4, n. 123.
51. The story is recorded in Ait.Br. 7.13–19 and ŚāṅkhŚS. 15.17–27.
52. Ait.Br. 7.15.7.
53. See Heesterman, *Royal Consecration* (n. 36), 158–61.
54. On the royal conquering circuit see J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 119–22.
55. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.2.3.1 (taking *upasad*, “sitting near,” as “siege”); Maitr.Saṃh. 3.8.1:92.1–5; cf. ĀpŚS. 11.4.8.
56. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 11), nos. 78, 80, 106a, d, f, g.
57. Kāth.Saṃh. 24.7:97.16; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.7.8:87.15; Taitt.Saṃh. 6.1.11.6. See sec. 1.9 and chap. 1, n. 133.
58. Kauṣ.Br. 10.3.
59. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.1.11.6, though recording the prohibition, argues that the he-goat victim slays hostile forces and that therefore one should eat of it.
60. Kāth.Saṃh. 23.6:81.14; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.6.7:69.17; cf. ĀpŚS. 10.15.15; Manu 4.210. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 27, 208 n. 6; see also n. 57 above.
61. Kāth.Saṃh. 34.8:41.17; 34.11:44.14; Taitt.Saṃh. 7.2.10.2, 4. See Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 1), 36.
62. Taitt.Saṃh. 7.4.9; Kanṣ.Br. 15.1; Jaim.Br. 2.374 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 162).
63. See A. Hillebrandt, “Der freiwillige Feuertod in Indien und die Soma-weihe,” *Sitzungsberichte der Königlichen Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse*, 1917, 8 Abhandlungen, 1–19 (deriving *dīkṣā* from *dah-*, “to burn”); J. Filliozat, “L’abandon de la vie par le sage et les suicides du criminel et du héros dans la tradition indienne,” *Arts asiatiques* 15 (1967): 65–88.
64. The *dārṣadvata ayana*, the sacrificial course along the river Dṛṣadvatī, Pañc.Br. 25.13.4: *tad eva manusyebyhas tiro bhavati*; see also ĀpŚS. 23.13.15.
65. Pañc.Br. 22.3.2; 23.8.2.
66. See n. 50 above.
67. Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 1), 36.
68. Taitt.Saṃh. 7.4.11.2–3: the *sattra* is likened to a wheel of fortune (“the turning wheel of the gods”); if ritualistically well-arranged the *sattra* will ensure success (“they obtain prosperity”).

69. As is the ritualistic prescript, ĀpŚS. 21.13.5.

70. Taitt.Saṃh. 7.5.9.1–2. For the *sattra* as a raid cf. Pañc.Br. 10.12.1; Jaim.Br. 3.332–333. Significantly at a *sattra* there is no *saniyācana*, collecting the goods for sacrifice; it is itself a *saniyācana*.

71. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.2.4–5; cf. Kāth.Saṃh. 26.2:124.1; Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.1:113.14; Śat.Br. 3.6.3.1; see also ĀpŚS. 11.17.10–18.2.

72. Taitt.Saṃh. 6.3.2.6; cf. Maitr.Saṃh. 3.9.1:113.20; Kāth.Saṃh. 26.2:124.6; Śat.Br. 3.6.3.21; see also ĀpŚS. 11.18.3.

73. See sec. 6.1 above.

74. On the formal differences (according to the classical system) and their dubiousness (from the historical point of view) see Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 32. It is surprising here that Falk credits me in this connection with the spurious “ghost theory” that the *sattra* would owe its existence to the exclusion of the *dakṣiṇā* gifts and their donor from the soma ritual so as to spare the punctilious brahmins the embarrassment of accepting such poisonous gifts. What I did say is that Gopatha Br. 1.5.7. rates the sacrifice “without *dakṣiṇā*” as the highest and that “the *sattras* of the classical ritual” present a case in point (*Wiener Zeitschrift Für die Kunde Südasiens* 8, 1964; *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 38). I do not quite see how I changed from a position that the *sattrin* (as well as the *dikṣitā*) derives from the *vrātya* (“Vrātya and Sacrifice,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1962): 34). Amusing though it is to be credited with a ghost theory one has never held, one regrets that apparently scholars *have* to differ or otherwise must invent something on which to disagree. It is therefore a matter of satisfaction to note that Falk does agree with my view of *sattra* and *vrātyas* and, moreover, develops it in a most interesting way.

75. ĀpŚS. 21.1.3–4.

76. *Ibid.*, 16.

77. Against this background we can understand the otherwise puzzling question that the brahmin invited to officiate should ask, i.e., whether it is not an *ahina*; see Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma* (n. 11), no. 4; ĀpŚS. 10.1.3. A brahmin who officiates for a group of sacrificers (*grāmayājīn*) is excluded from commensality; cf. Manu 3.151, 4.205, Gautama 15.16, Viṣṇu Smṛti 82.13.

78. See Caland and Henry, *L’Agniṣṭoma*, no. 23. See sec. 4.5 and chap. 4, n. 72 above.

79. ĀpŚS. 20.5.15; Vādh.S. (*Acta Orientalia* 4, 1926), no. 79. See J. C. Heesterman, “The Significance of the *dakṣiṇā*,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3 (1959): 248.

80. Kāth.Saṃh. 26.2:122.11; having conquered the three worlds the gods disband, *yathā grāmas saṃgrāmād visṛjyate*.

81. J. C. Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 6 (1962): 1–37, esp. 29. Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 1), 17–30, adds further details and comparative materials.

82. On Rudra’s conspicuous relationship with the *vrātya* and with cattle, cattle diseases, and cattle rustling, see Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 57–64.

83. Although *vrātyas* are mentioned as *sattrins* performing the sixty-one-days-long *sattra* (Pañc.Br. 24.18.1–9), it is significant that the *vrātyastomas* are *ahinas*,

apparently harking back to the preclassical pattern with an unspecified number of participants (see above and n. 76).

84. In an introductory remark to Pañc.Br. 4 (Caland trans., 43) W. Caland points out that the verb *yanti*, “they go,” with instrumental case and accusative case of time denotes a continuous occupation with any sacrifice, and that consequently the translation of *gavām ayana* as “the course” or “the walk of the cows” suggests an idea that is not inherent in this word *ayana*. Such is certainly the technical usage of this term in the classical system of ritual. However, it seems more than likely that originally *ayana* referred to an actual course (see, e.g., the mobile *sattras*; Pañc.Br. 25.10–13, consistently called *ayana*). It stands to reason that in the classical system the meaning of *ayana* was changed into a sequence of similar acts or sacrifices (mostly staying in the same place, the actual movement being replaced by the course or sequence of ritualistic acts).

85. Śat.Br. 4.6.8.1–3. On the *purastādvadana* see below.

86. BaudhŚS. 16.13:260.3. The mutual quizzing reminds one of the Celtic druids who contended with each other for the leadership (cf. F. Le Roux and C. J. Guyonvarc’h, *Les Druides* [Rennes, 1982], 106). The requirement that the aspirant member of the *fianna* war bands be a “poet” also seems relevant here (see Introduction n. 8 above).

87. See M. Sparreboom, *Chariots in the Veda* (Leiden, 1985), 57–59.

88. BaudhŚS. 17.43:324.6.

89. ĀpŚS. 21.1.12.

90. Kāth.Saṃh. 34.9:43.1 (read with Caland: *tasmin dr̥ṣṭa udatiṣṭhan*).

91. Ibid., 43.20.

92. Ibid., 44.1. See Caland *ad* ĀpŚS. 21.2.9 f.

93. See Pañc.Br. 10.3.2; Jaim.Br. 2.55; 3.4.

94. See Kāth.Saṃh. 34.8:42.11: *sad vai sattriṇaḥ spr̥ṇvanti*.

95. Kāth.Saṃh. 34.9:43.2; cf. Pañc.Br. 10.3.2.

96. Jaim.Br. 2.55 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 125).

97. For these paraphernalia as royal attributes (*rājaparīṣkāra*) see Jaim.Br. 1.341. See also Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 54) 126. The *sāmulājina* also belongs to the attributes of the *vr̥atyas* (*vr̥atyadhana*), together with staff and sandals (*danḍopānahau*); see BaudhŚS. 18.25:373.8.

98. Śat.Br. 5.4.3.15.

99. LāṭyŚS. 18.7.10, 12.1; cf. VaikhŚS. 17.18:248.2: *kṣatratvṛttiṃ nivartayet*. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 121.

100. See Heesterman, *Royal Consecration* (n. 36), chap. 21, pp. 173–78.

101. Jaim.Br. 3.4; cf. Pañc.Br. 10.3.4.

102. Ait.Br. 2.19.1–3.

103. Cf. Pañc.Br. 10.3.7.

104. BaudhŚS. 18.25:373.2.

105. Ibid. 18.24:371.6.

106. The staff (*daṇḍa*) of the *dīkṣita* is equated with the bow and arrows (*tiṣṭhānva*) of the *vrātya* (BaudhŚS. 18.24:371.11). The equation is meant to put the *vrātya* and the *dīkṣita* on a par. Although the staff is also mentioned as an attribute of the *vrātya* (n. 97 above), the bow and arrows appear to be his more original and typical distinction that connects him with Rudra. On the *tiṣṭhānva*, see Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 1), 24–28.

107. The same pattern seems also to obtain with the *vrātyas* when we are told that their leader carries an *unstrung* bow (*jyāhṇoda*, Pañcav.Br. 17.1.14; cf. KātyŚS. 22.4.11, where this term is explained as an “unfit bow,” *ayogyam dhanus*). Equally we find that the warrior *vrātinās* have their bows strung (*adhijyadhanvānaḥ*) while the bow of their leader is unstrung (*ujya*); cf. ŚāṅkhŚS. 14.22.20; LāṭyŚS. 8.5.1 (see Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 30).

108. Of course, staying in his *śālā* he is open to be challenged as the lordly asuras were by the mobile devas. But the outcome may well be that the mobile challengers will end by seeking the asuric magnate’s patronage. Thus we are told that the devas, having been defeated by the asuras, entered their service (Maitr.Saṃh. 2.3.7:34.13; Kāth. Saṃh. 12.5:166.18; Taitt.Saṃh. 2.3.7.1.). A R̥gveda passage even suggests that the asuras as munificent sacrificers allowed the devas to win their trust (*śraddhā*; R̥gveda 10.151.3; Taitt.Br. 2.8.8.7.).

109. LāṭyŚS. 8.6.1. On the selection of the leader see also n. 86 above.

110. BaudhŚS. 18.24:371.5.

111. Jaim.Br. 2.223; cf. 2.419 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 168), in which the sons of one Ahīnas Āśvatthi want to undertake a *sattra*. After having been warned against its dangers they are instructed by their father about the proper procedure. Although Ahīnas’ instructions refer to the classical *śrauta* ritual, the identification of the phases of this *sattra* looks suspiciously like those of a *vrātya* campaign. For sons being similarly warned by their father against setting out as *vrātyas* see also BaudhŚS. 18.26:374.8 (*kurubrahmanām putrāḥ*). See also n. 122 below.

112. Cf. sec. 6.1 above and n. 21.

113. See n. 108 above on the devas entering the service of the asuras and on gaining the asuras’ *śraddhā*.

114. See also Jaim.Br. 1.22 (Caland, *Auswahl*, no. 6; see also A. W. Bodewitz’s trans. *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* 1.1–65 (Leiden, 1973), 72).

115. W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 1985), 95, 97.

116. See 5.2 above and chap. 5, nos. 43, 44.

117. See M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden, 1975), 1:213.

118. Thus, e.g., the tradition of performing the *agnicayana* and *atirātra* soma ritual among the Nambudiris of Central Kerala depended on an endowment made for this purpose by the Trivandrum rulers in the eighteenth century. The foundation paid out every twelve years to those who had performed during the preceding period an *iṣṭi*, a *somayāga*, or an *agnicayana*. At the end of the twelve-year period there was a regular flurry of Vedic *śrauta* sacrifices. The last time this happened was 1953. Rather than lack of interest it was agrarian land reform legislation that rendered the endowment ineffective and all but ended the tradition. The 1975 performance,

filmed and recorded as *Altar of Fire* by J. F. Staal and R. Gardner with funding from the Smithsonian Institution and other external science foundations, could only be achieved—and an achievement it certainly was—with considerable difficulty. It may be that this event has given the tradition a new lease of life (in 1990 there was a repeat performance), but it is hard to see how it will be maintained without regular funding.

119. Ait.Br. 7.27–28; see Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 54), 76 f.

120. See Heesterman, “Vrātya and Sacrifice” (n. 81), 10; *Inner Conflict of Tradition*, 76.

121. See n. 108 above.

122. ĀśvGS. 1.23.2. Cf. ŚāṅkhŚS. 5.1.1. See also 6.5 above on the *Vrātyas* being regularly called “sons.”

123. Kauṣ.Br. 6.11; cf. Ait.Br. 5.33.4. See also sec. 5.3 and chap. 5, n. 51 above.

124. See J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* (Bombay, 1922), 213; M. Boyce, “On the Sacred Fires of the Zoroastrians,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31 (1968): 53.

### Chapter Seven

1. On *tejas* being stressed instead of the fire itself cf. H. Oldenberg, *Die Weltanschauung der Brāhmaṇa-Texte* (Göttingen, 1929), 60 n. 4. In a similar way we see *tapas*, heat, developing to “contemplative power”; see W. O. Kaelber, *Tapta-Mārga* (Albany, N.Y., 1989), esp. 144.

2. See sec. 3.8. 7–8.

3. See sec. 3.3.

4. W. Caland, *Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra Aanwinsten, Verslagen en Mededelingen Kon. Ak. van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde* (Amsterdam, 1920), 478.

5. See sec. 5.4 and chap. 5, n. 78. In this light, it is tempting to interpret the compound *brahma-odana* as a karmadhāraya: a rice mess that represents *brahman* (cf. H. Krick, *Das Ritual der Feuergründung* [Vienna, 1982], 236).

6. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.3.1f; cf. Śat.Br. 11.1.8.6. See sec. 5.4 above.

7. Taitt.Br. 2.8.8.3. On *anna* see M. Mauss, “Anna-Virāj,” in *Mélanges Sylvain Lévi*, (Paris, 1911), 333–41, dealing with ritualistic numerology (the ten-syllable *virāj* meter equated with *anna*), which seems to be also relevant to the dicing game.

8. For an overview of the *cāturmāsya*s see A. Hildebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur*, (Strasbourg, 1897), 115–17; for the Marut *iṣṭis* ĀpŚS. 8.9–12. See also G. U. Tithe, *Sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇa-Texts* (Poona, 1975), 55–76, which stresses the aspect of healing and curing (namely the “joints” in the year, pp. 56–57) further, V. V. Bhide, *The Cāturmāsya Sacrifices* (Poona, 1979). A full-scale description has been undertaken by Sh. Einoo, *Die Cāturmāsya, oder die altindischen Tertialopfer dargestellt nach den Vorschriften der Brāhmaṇas und der Śrautasūtras* (Monumenta Serindica 18) (Tokyo, 1988).

9. Kāth.Saṃh. 36.9:76.12; Maitr.Saṃh. 1.10.15:155.2; Taitt.Br. 1.6.6.5.

10. Characteristics of the *grhya* pattern of sacrifices are the absence of the fore



and after offerings (*prayāja*, *anuyāja*) and of the *sāmidhenī* or “kindling” (i.e., fueling) verses (cf. Taitt.Br. 1.6.6.5–6; ĀpŚS. 8.9.10; for such negative characteristics see ŚāṅkhGS. 1.10.5). On the other hand, the *idā* rite, though normally excluded from the domestic sacrifice, is explicitly prescribed for this Marut *īṣṭi*, but the *prāṣitra* or fore portion of the *brahman* officiant is ruled out (ĀpŚS. 8.11.6; Śat.Br. 2.5.3.10, 16). On some points of detail the *grhya* and *śrauta* modes are given as alternatives; cf. ĀpŚS. 8.9.8–9 (suggesting the *śrauta* scenario as against the *grhya* one); 8.9.11 (separating the calves from the cows for milking with or without mantras; use or absence of *pavitra* or “purifier” consisting of two grass blades held over the milking vessel); 8.10.4 and 11.2–4 (use or absence of the *dhruvā* and *juhū* ladles). There is a noticeable wavering between *grhya* and *śrauta* forms. But the point is their interweaving, so as to have it both ways.

11. See n. 9.

12. ĀpŚS. 8.11.3.

13. Śat.Br. 2.5.3.6; cf. ĀpŚS. 8.11.2–3. There is a similar rule for the *brahmaudana*; see BaudhŚS. 2.14:56.7, VādhS. 1.1.1.14.

14. See sec. 3.8.

15. ĀpŚS. 8.11.10–14; cf. HirŚS. 5.3:473; BhārŚS. 8.13.18–22; VaikhŚS. 9.3:91.15; MānŚS. 1.7.3.17–19; LāṛyŚS. 5.1.12. Cf. also Taitt.Br. 1.6.7.2 (anointing eyes and body).

16. ĀpŚS. 8.10.7–9.

17. Ibid. 8.11.8.

18. Ibid. 8.11.11.

19. Ibid. 8.10.10. See also below.

20. For a similar case see J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 52.

21. See sec. 2.5.

22. ĀpŚS. 8.10.10; HirŚS. 5.3:472 (the *prativeśa odana* for the *patnī*: HirŚS. 5.3: 471, 473); BhārŚS. 8.13.1; VaikhŚS. 9.2: 91.2, 4; MānŚS. 1.7.5.19, 27 (asigning the *prativeśa* mess to the *amātyas* in general); VārŚS. 1.7.3.9, 14–16.

23. BaudhŚS. 5.10:142.5.

24. Śat.Br. 5.2.3.5–11, 11–16.

25. For adjectival sense only see Maitr.Samh. 1.10.15:155.1; Taitt.Br. 2.6.7.1; BaudhŚS. 5.10:142.5. Kāth.Samh. 36.9:76.11 (*prativeśa odanam paceta*) is ambiguous. Śat.Br. 2.5.3.11, dealing with its single rice mess variant, has *prativeśa* only once: *nedeṇa prativeśam ājyam adhiśrayati*, “he does not prepare extra ghee on the fire” (perhaps because there is only one single rice mess in which the ghee is held, i.e., in the hollow made in the solid mess). Āpastamba, Hiraṇyakeśin and Bharadvāja have *prativeśa* both in the sense of “nearby” (or “subsidiary”) and of “neighbor” (ĀpŚS. 8.10.10, where *prativeśa* is glossed as “on the southern fire,” *dakṣiṇāgnau*, as against 8.11.11, “neighbor”; HirŚS. 5.3:471 as against 473; BhārŚS. 8.12.16 as against 21). In another context—fueling the fire—the sacrificer calls himself Agni’s *prativeśa*, “ally.” “O Agni, let us, your *prativeśas*, not come to harm” (Taitt.Samh.

4.1.10d; Maitr.Samh. 2.7.7:83.120; Kāth.Samh. 16.7; 238.6; Vāj. Samh. 11.75; Śat.Br. 6.6.3.8; cf. ĀpŚS. 6.2.2, 25.7; BaudhŚS. 1.6.3.12). This usage seems to be more plausible than a “nearby fire” or a “subsidiary” rice mess. (The same seems to be the case in MānŚS 9.1.5.2.)

26. See VaikhŚS. 9.2; 61.2 *pratipuruṣam*.

27. For *prativedā* see also sec. 7.5.

28. See ĀpŚS. 3.2.11.

29. On the domestic animal sacrifice see Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur* (n. 8), 73. On the association of the *odana* with meat see sec. 3.8 and chap. 3, n.95.

30. In one of the *cāturmāsya*s, the *varuṇapraghāsa*, that precedes the *sākamedha* by four months we find another way of dealing with the animal sacrifice. There we also find a celebration of the Maruts, in this case the “Devouring” ones (*praghāsa*). But instead of real animal victims, there are the figures of a sheep and a ram made from dough (*piṣṭapaśu*). For good measure this vegetal *iṣṭi* is given some ritualistic marks of the animal sacrifice (fire drilling, number of “kindling” verses, number of fore and after offerings); see ĀpŚS. 8.6.12, 18, 29, 31. It would seem that here too we have an erstwhile animal sacrifice, reduced to a vegetal *iṣṭi*. However, in this case not even the semblance of a communal banquet is preserved. It has been ritualistically “recycled” so as to suit the regular *iṣṭi* format. This, rather than vegetarian concern, which is not mentioned in this connection, seems to be the motif. The *piṣṭapaśu* as such may well be archaic.

31. BaudhŚS. 8.9:8.8 on the skulls to be buried under the brick altar; see chap. 2.7.

32. For the gambling episode in the *agnyādheya* see ĀpŚS. 5.19.4–20.3; Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 5), 76–81, 84, 339–44, 422–27. For the *rājasūya* see J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* (The Hague, 1957), 143–47. See also H. Falk, *Bruderschaft und Würfelspiel* (Freiburg, 1986), 134–74.

33. Kāth.Samh. 8.7:90.10; cf. Maitr.Samh. 1.6.11:104.6.

34. Maitr.Samh. 4.4.6:57.10.

35. See sec. 3.3.

36. BaudhŚS. 2.9:48.11.

37. This is one of the few instances of the victim’s blood being ritually used. See chap. 2, n. 117 above.

38. According to Taitt.Br. 1.3.10.1 the rice ball offering was the ancestors’ condition for giving the sacrifice back to the gods. It is quoted by BaudhŚS. 2.7 in explanation of the *upavasathagavi*. The last vestige of the meal is that the rice balls, after exposure, are given to a brahmin if they are not thrown in the waters (ĀpŚS. 1.10.16).

39. BaudhŚS. 2.15:57.10.

40. Ibid. 2.15:57.13; cf. 20.16:36.7.

41. Ibid. 2.11:52.7.

42. Vādhūla has finally canceled the dicing contest of the *agnyādheya*.

43. See ĀpŚS. 5.19.2, 20.5.

44. According to some texts the meal is to be eaten in the *āvasatha* hall (ĀpŚS. 5.20.3; VaikhŚS. 1.15:16.4).

45. BaudhŚS. 2.7:43.17. The phrase “in case he does not get a cow” (*yadi gāṃ na labhate*) seems to suggest that the sacrificer must first win a cow that is then staked by him in a new game (see Krick, *Feuergründung* [n. 5], 94).

46. H. Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 32), 156.

47. Taitt.Br. 1.7.10.6; ĀpŚS. 18.19.2; BaudhŚS. 12.15:109. 3,8.

48. BaudhŚS. 2, 14:56.12: *praśamsanti rādhas te brahmaudana iti*. See perhaps MānŚS. 1.5.5.16, where the food the sacrificer gives to the officiant as the result of the dicing should be graced by the recipients with pleasing words (*ramaṇīyam atraiva mantrayeran*).

49. It would seem that something more than simple praise of the rice mess was involved. Baudhāyana connects the phrase *odanam udbruvate* with the shares in the food put at stake, while Hiranyakṣin has instead of this phrase *odanam adhipaṇam* (perhaps a gerund) “putting up the *odana* as stake [in the game].” *ud-brū* might then have been a technical term meaning “declare one’s stake in the game.” It stands to reason that one did not put up something worthless in a critical game for overlordship and that, consequently, one had proudly to extol what one put up. The praise will then originally not have referred to the one *odana* provided by the sacrificer—the only possible object for such praise in the classical single-sacrificer ritual—but the valuable goods one risked in the game. This interpretation would also tally with the other significant occurrence of *ud-brū-* in Śat.Br. 5.2.2.4 referring to all manner of food being brought together by the *vājapeya* sacrificer. Not all kinds of food are, however, to be brought together; one should be left out and henceforth tabooed: *sa yan na sambharati, tasyodbruvita, tasya nāśnīyād yāvadajivam*. Eggeling, followed by Falk (*Bruderschaft*, 168, n. 471), renders *udbruvita* with “to forswear.” That is, one renounces one’s right to a particularly valuable good, as one does when staking it in a game. Thus, *ud-brū-* would then mean “boasting of what one gives up, stakes [in a game].”

50. Maitr.Samh. 1.6.11.104.6; MānŚS. 1.4.4.15; taken over by the Taittirīyaka: ĀpŚS. 5.19.4; HirŚS. 3.5.321; BhārŚS. 5.12.5.8. See Falk, *Bruderschaft*, 156, 159. A similar procedure is indicated Atharvaveda Samh. 9.5.4 (cf. KauŚS. 64.10). See also the dissecting of the sacrificial horse (ĀpŚS. 20.19.9; BaudhŚS. 15.31: 12).

51. MānŚS. 1.5.5.14: *angaśa iva visarjayeyuh*.

52. VārŚS. 1.4.4.15.

53. BhārŚS. 5.12.10.

54. This does not mean, of course, that there were no *odanas* without meat. Such vegetarian preparations cooked in milk or water would even be *de rigueur* during periods when meat was forbidden, as, e.g., during transhumance. Conversely, it is obvious that there were other means of preparing meat than by way of the *odana*. The latter method seems, however, to have been favored in the *aṣṭakā* and *śrāddha* feasts (cf. W. Caland, *Altindischer Abmenkult* [Leiden, 1893], 166).

55. Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 5), 94, 343, and n. 917; see also Falk, *Bruderschaft* (n. 32), 156. Interestingly Krick connects the two rounds with the sacrificer having to play also the role of his opponent (from whom he first has to win the cow): “deshalb wurde der eine Agon zu zwei Würfelspielen aufgegliedert.” On the dicing contest see also chap. 4.7 above.

56. That the sacrificer keeps out of the second round seems to be suggested by BhārŚS. 5.12.6: *uttiṣṭhati*, “he gets up.”

57. See n. 50 above.

58. HirŚS. 13.6.29; MānŚS. 9.1.4.20–23. Cf. VārŚS. 3.3.3.24–27.

59. MānŚS. 1.5.5.16; VārŚS. 1.4.4.17; BhārŚS. 5.12.10; ĀpŚS. 5.20.2 has the plural “what *they* win.” The source is Maitr.Samh. 1.6.11:104.7.

60. It is possible, though, that this pattern has been conflated with another one in which the sacrificer acts as a munificent patron organizing the game but not taking part in it. That is, he would then have reached a stage where he is no longer open to being challenged. Such an exceptional attainment may fit in with the *rāja-sūya* where the game of dice follows the sacrificer’s enthronement and proclamation as the *brahman* par excellence. However, in that case there would be no need for him anymore to go out and win a cow to be put up as a prize for the contenders over whom he presides. There would then be a shift from a binary pattern of challenging and being challenged to a ternary one in which the royal sacrificer presides over the contest. Such a shift, or conflation, can more often be observed. However, the basic pattern is in all events that of the contest to which even the royal magnate—and he especially—may have to submit.

61. It is tempting to view the gambling for a cow staked by one party against rice grains put up by the other as a sign of a changed world. It is no longer the cattle keeper’s game of staking bovine against bovine. Rice as a stake might mean the expansion of intensive cultivation. Roughly speaking, the speculative picture would be that of a king arranging for a feast like, say, the later *dasahrā* at which the *mahiṣa* bull is killed, while the subjects reciprocate by bringing in their agrarian tribute or land revenue. The tenth day of *dasahrā*, the *vijayadaśamī* or “victory tenth,” was indeed the day when, in later times, the accounts were closed. It would be an engaging speculation to view the agrarian state arising out of the sacrificial contest. However, it should be realized that our texts (in contradistinction to the Buddhist scriptures) are not concerned with the world around them. The ritualists’ imagination remains riveted to the world they have overcome. That, not socioeconomic or political change, is what holds their attention.

62. See sec. 1.7 and chap. 1, n. 102.

63. MānŚS. 9.1.4.22.

64. Atharvaveda Samh. 4.35.7; Kāṭh. Samh. 36.9:76.11; Maitr.Samh. 1.10.15:154.18. Cf. Taitt.Br. 1.6.7.2. See also n. 62 above.

65. BhārŚS. 5.12.10. The *brāhmaṇas* do not seem to be different, at least originally, from the *sabhāsads* mentioned in the preceding sūtra.

66. Taitt.Samh. 2.6.9.7., on the *śamyuvāka*; for the manipulation of the pressing stones see LāṭyŚS. 1.10.13; DrāhŚS. 3.2.18.

67. See sec. 2.7 and chap. 4.7.

68. For a general survey see Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur* (n. 8), 113; A. Hillebrandt, *Das altindische Neu- und Vollmondsopfer* (Jena, 1880), 119–29; ĀpŚS. 3.1.6–3.1 and 7.26.1–7. See also Heesterman, “Veda and Society,” *Studia Orientalia* 50 (Helsinki 1981), 56–58.

69. See ŚāṅkhŚS. 1.10.1–12.1.

70. Śat.Br. 5.1.1.1–2; 11.1.8.1–2. One might view this as a criticism of the desocialized individualism that permeates the *śrauta* ritual. But it is striking that the devas and asuras fight ritualistically, each on his own side, without any contact between the two parties.

71. ĀpŚS. 3.2.11. A similar rule obtains for the animal sacrifice, ĀpŚS. 7.23.3 and 26.5, where we find the numbers six (for the cake) and seven (for the meat *idā*). The emphasis on particular numbers suggests the idea of the full community, numbers being frequently used to express completeness.

72. See sec. 5.4.

73. Taitt.Saṃh. 1.7.1.1; Śat.Br. 1.8.1.16, 43.

74. ĀpGS. 1.1.2.9–11.

75. Śat.Br. 2.3.1.21.

76. Ṛgveda 10.117.6; cf. Taitt.Br. 2.8.8.3; also Manu 3.118.

77. BaudhŚS. 2.11:52.2–5. See Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 5), 81 n. 210.

78. See chap. 6.2. See also J. C. Heesterman, “La réception du ‘roi Soma,’” in *Essais sur le rituel*, vol. 3, ed. A. M. Blondeau and K. Schipper (Paris and Louvain, 1993).

79. See Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur* (n. 8), 79. In characteristic fashion we also find a guest reception in accordance with the domestic ritual (albeit without meat) for “King Soma,” separate from the *śrauta* guest *isti*, i.e., a rice mess (ĀpŚS. 10.3.7; KātyŚS. 7.2.1). See n. 81 below: the *odana* is the human way, the cake sacrifice the divine way. See also n. 85.

80. HirGS. 1.13.14. We may think here of the Buddhist distinction between an animal specifically killed for the guest as against an animal otherwise killed. See H. Oldenberg *ad* ŚāṅkhGS. 2.15.2; also J. C. Heesterman, “Review of L. Alsdorf,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 9 (1966): 148.

81. Śat.Br. 1.6.4.3. The rice mess or the he-goat is significantly said to be the human way, the cake (*puroḍāśa*) the divine way. The “two relatives or friends” refer to Agni and Indra who are honored together with the cake. It may be noted that the guests receive their food “in common” like the *brahmaudana* but in contradistinction to the *gṛhamedha* feast in which the ritualists tended to assign to each his own *odana*.

82. ĀpGS. 3.9.

83. ĀpŚS. 10.31.12.

84. Ait.Br. 1.15.6; cf. Kāth.Saṃh. 24.8:89.7.

85. See BaudhŚS. 21.12:91.12, which confirms that it is indeed the same he-goat held at the entrance of the *śālā* to propitiate Agni and Soma (see also Vādhūla

in W. Caland, *Acta Orientalia* 6, p. 163). Baudhāyana goes so far as to restore the honey mixture (*madhuparka*) and the cow that is due an important guest (BaudhŚS 6.17:175.17; cf. 21.13:92.8). See also chap. 3, n. 93 above.

86. Maitr.Samh. 3.9.1:112.6. Caland, *ad* ĀpŚS. 11.16.15, tentatively: “beim Vrata beteiligt, denn ihr Vrata hat teil an ihm.” The *apivratas* are present at the *vaisarjana* libation that dissolves the bond (BaudhŚS. 6.30:194.17).

87. Jaim.Br. 2.25. See W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien* (Wiesbaden, 1957), 56 n. 15.

88. See Hillebrandt, *Ritual-Literatur* (n. 8), 139; ĀpŚS. 22.2.6–4.12; Pañc.Br. 16.12–14.

89. See ĀpŚS. 22.2.18; Pañc.Br. 16.13.10,13. On the chariots leather bags with milk are carried so that the movement will make the butter coagulate. This feature links the *sādyaskra* with the *iṣṭi* for Mitra and Brhaspati that belongs to the *ratnin* complex of the *rājasūya* when the king visits his servants and feudatories and alternates these visits with an *iṣṭi* on the central place of sacrifice. In the case of the *maitrabārhaspatya* the chariots are only used for driving about to produce the butter. In the *sādyaskra* we get a fuller view of the chariot’s function. There even is a suggestion of chariot racing and raiding (cf. Heesterman, *Royal Consecration* [n. 32], 58). See also sec. 2.5.

90. BaudhŚS. 18.20:366.12; cf. HirŚS. 17.1.33; ĀpŚS. 22.2.17.

91. ĀpŚS. 22.2.12; cf. 22.3.11. The Agni-Soma animal may be replaced with a cake (*puṛoḍāśa*), which is the divine offering as against the rice mess for humans as we already learned (see n. 81 above).

92. It may be noted that the animal sacrifice can be performed either as an *iṣṭi* (*iṣṭividha*) or according to the soma format (*somavidha*); ĀpŚS. 7.28.1; cf. Śat.Br. 11.7.2.1–3. In the former case the *sādyaskra* would—but for the added soma ritual—be indeed an *iṣṭi*, also in the ritualistic sense. It stands to reason, however, that the animal sacrifice is integrated in the soma ritual so as to stress the *sādyaskra*’s classification as a soma sacrifice (see ĀpŚS. 22.3.10).

93. See sec. 1.9.

94. ĀpŚS. 22.3.16; HirŚS. 17.1.53. Originally the losing party set out to recuperate (as the epic heroes must do). Thus the *dikṣita* is said to take up the *dikṣā* from the waters of the consecratory bath where the Angirases left it (at their final bath) when they went to heaven (Taitt.Samh. 6.1.1.2). So there is a perpetual cyclical alternation.

95. Śat.Br. 1.8.1.39. This is another instance of the ritualistic art of ambivalence, of doing something—i.e., eating—and at the same time not doing it.

96. ĀpŚS. 4.16.17; VaikhŚS. 7.14:78.15 specifies eight or ten brahmins at an *iṣṭi*, a hundred at an animal sacrifice, and a thousand at a soma sacrifice. The later theorists raise the question of whether the remainder—in fact the bulk—of the sacrificial food is to be consumed by the participants only or by others (Jaimini Sūtra 6.4.4). The conclusion is it is to be consumed by others (presumably brahmins) because, as the commentator Śabara amusingly argues, the small group of participants might not survive the huge amount of food—*la grande bouffe* indeed.

97. In the case of new and full moon sacrifices, the basic paradigm of the *iṣṭi*, there is also a second cake or a milk preparation (*sāmnāyā*), which is not quartered but removed and eaten at a later point of time, without any ritual elaboration (ĀpŚS. 3.7.15, after the *śamyuvāka* at the end of the ritual).

98. BaudhŚS. 24.29:214.9 explicitly includes them together with the *anvāhārya* in the *dakṣiṇā*.

99. ĀpŚS. 5.7.17, 20.7; Maitr.Samh. 1.6.4:92.11.

100. See Krick, *Feuergründung* (n. 5), 272.

101. Ibid. 239, 312 n. 815.

102. Another example are the horse, the bull, the ram, and the he-goat given as *dakṣiṇā* at a particular *iṣṭi* (Taitt.Samh. 2.3.7.4; see W. Caland, *Altindische Zauberei* [Amsterdam, 1908], no. 175). These animals strikingly remind one of the animal victims whose heads are to be buried under the brick altar.

103. Manu 1.86.

104. See Ch. Malamoud, “Terminer le sacrifice,” in *Le sacrifice dans l’Inde ancienne*, ed. M. Biardau and Ch. Malamoud (Paris, 1976), 179–84. See chap. 2, n. 133 above.

105. For an account of these speculations see H. W. Bodewitz, “Agnihotra and Prāṇāgnihotrā,” *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa 1.1*–65, (Leiden, 1973), 1:213–338. The relevant brāhmaṇa passages have been conveniently put together by the same author in *The Daily Evening and Morning Offering according to the Brahmanas* (Leiden, 1976).

106. See, e.g., PārGS. 1.9.1; ĀpDhS. 1.13.21.

107. Śat.Br. 2.3.1.1.9.

108. Taitt.Br. 3.7.3.1.

109. ĀpŚS. 6.1.5.1; HirŚS. 3.7:356. In ritualistic fashion the various substances are connected with special wishes.

110. Vādhūla S., W. Caland, *Acta Orientalia* 4, 30 (see Bodewitz, *Daily Evening and Morning Offering*, 129 and n. 42). See also ŚāṅkhGS. 2.16.5: “A bull, the *agnihotra* and a *brahmacārin*, these three prosper only if they eat.”

111. Taitt.Br. 2.1.5.11.

112. Kāth.Samh. 6.6:56.1; Maitr.Samh. 1.8.7:126.17. See also chap. 2.7 (end) above.

113. Kāth.Samh. 6.6:56.3; See Bodewitz, “*Agnihotra*” (n. 105), 227 n. 14.

114. See sec. 4.8 (end).

115. See sec. 1.5.

116. Maitr.Samh. 1.6.10:102.18. The verb *karoti*, “to do,” probably here means also “to slaughter” (see chap. 1, n. 91).

117. Manu 5.93. For the *sattra* as the collecting of the goods of sacrifice and thus as preceding the actual sacrifice, see sec. 4.3 above.

118. See Heesterman, *Inner Conflict of Tradition* (n. 20), 228 n. 50.

119. See sec. 6.6.

120. Bodewitz, “*Agnihotra*,” 256, 310.

Chapter Eight

1. See sec. 4.8 and chap. 4, n. 133.

2. Śat.Br. 2.2.2.17.

3. The innovative nature of this idea is borne out by the fact that the (relatively late) White Yayurveda devised a special rite for the sacrificer to draw the newly drilled fire into himself. Having blown on the fire sparks—as one naturally does to make the fire blaze up—it is expressly prescribed that the sacrificer should inhale so as to establish the fire in his inner self (Śat.Br. 2.2.2.15; Kāty.ŚS. 4.8.26–27). Of course, after blowing out, one will inhale anyway. The point is the explicit prescription to do so, which lifts the everyday act out of its natural context and transposes it to the autonomous plane of reflective ritualism. Therefore also mantras are assigned to the act.

4. Śat.Br. 11.2.6.13.

5. H. W. Bodewitz (*Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* 1.1–65 [Leiden, 1973], 304, argues that it is in fact the same “external” sacrifice but interpreted, in the *adhyātma* scheme, as referring to the Self in contradistinction to the *adhidēvata* scheme that is concerned with the equivalence of ritual and macrocosmos (which would then represent the stand of the *devayājīn* who serves the gods instead of the Self). Bodewitz, however, also shows that the *ātmayājīn*’s sacrifice all but imperceptibly shades over into an “internal” sacrifice in the self, as one may expect. See also B. K. Smith, *Reflections on Ritual, Resemblance and Religion* (Oxford, 1989), 209–11.

6. S. Lévi, *La doctrine du sacrifice* (repr. Paris, 1966), 132.

7. F. B. J. Kuiper, “The Bliss of Aśa,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* (1964): 96–129, esp. 123–26.

8. Ṛgveda 7.88.2; cf. 1.130.3: *avindad divo nihitam guhā nidhim, ver na garbham parivitam aśmany anante antar aśmani*; 2.24.7: *bāhubhyām dhamitam agnim aśmani*.

9. Cf. Kuiper, “Bliss of Aśa” 125. See also Th. Oberlies, “Die Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 32 (1988): 35–62, esp. 43.

10. See sec. 4.8 above.

11. H. Oldenberg, *Die Lehre der Upanishaden und die Anfänge des Buddhismus* (Göttingen, 1916), 305.

12. Ṛgveda 10.90.16; see also 1.164.50.

13. See L. Renou, “Sur la notion de *brahman*,” *Journal Asiatique* 237 (1949): 7–46, esp. 18. On this phrase see also A. Minard, *Trois Énigmes sur les Cent Chemins*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1949), 373.

14. Śat.Br. 10.6.5.8; cf. 10.5.2.23. See also below.

15. Śat.Br. 10.4.3.9; cf. 10.5.4.16.

16. Renou, “Sur la notion de *brahman*,” 43.

17. See secs. 5.6 and 6.2 above.

18. Renou, “Sur la notion de *brahman*,” 18.

19. Atharvaveda Samh. 10.8.4.3; cf. 10.2.30–32, where the *yakṣam ātmanvat* known by the *brahmadevīdāḥ* resides in a heavenly golden vessel surrounded by light in the stronghold (*pur*) with nine doors of *brahman*. The imagery connects the



human body (characterized by “nine doors”) with sun, fire, and light. Interestingly man, the *puruṣa*, is also involved in the imagery: “He who knows the *pur* of *brahman*, after which [man] is called *puruṣa*, is not left by his eyesight nor by his life-breath before old age” (10.2.30).

20. See Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* (Chicago, 1985), 70–80.

21. Ṛgveda 10.129.4.

22. On *brāhmaṇa* see Minard, *Trois Énigmes*, 141.

23. Śat.Br. 10.5.3.1–2.

24. Śat.Br. 10.5.3.12; see n. 15 above.

25. Kuiper, “Bliss of Aśa” (n. 7), 125.

26. Śat.Br. 11.2.6.3; see chap. 4, n. 133 above.

27. See, e.g., M.-C. Porcher, “La représentation de l’espace sacré dans le *Kaṇḍī-māhātmya*,” *Puruṣārtha* 8 (1985): 23–51, esp. 41.

28. Atharvaveda Saṃh. 4.1.3.

29. See n. 14 above. Perhaps this may also tell us something about the Buddhist rejection of the *ātman*.

30. Śat.Br. 10.5.2.23.

31. This also provides the background for the so-called law of *karma*—the retribution for one’s deeds in one’s next life—which is not a law but a problem. There being no rival partner anymore with whom to exchange the *karma*, the “work” of sacrifice, man must go on exchanging it with himself in an unending chain of mundane existences. That is, he must again and again resolve the unsolvable in death. Hence the obsessive fear of “re-death” (*punarmr̥tyu*), the counterpart of *punarjanma*, that the ritualistic faith in the knowledge of *ātman* and *brahman* is meant to overcome.

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